

## A PLACE AT THE TABLE

(Luke 7:36-8:3)

Intro: When I was growing up in Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

-“Where if you’re a frog things are just ducky,  
But if you’re a duck you’re not so lucky.”

#If you weren’t here last Sunday.

\*Missed the context of that little ditty.

#You can check out the sermon archive.

\*On our church website.

+[www.ascensionlutheran.net](http://www.ascensionlutheran.net)

When I was growing up in Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

-On Thanksgiving Day.

#After morning worship.

#We would drive about 75 miles.

\*To the home of my aunt and uncle.

+In Curtiss, Wisconsin.

\*For Thanksgiving dinner.

+There were five of us in our family.

+My aunt and uncle had two daughters.

=My cousins.

+Another aunt and uncle would be there.

=From Medford, Wisconsin.

=They had a son and a daughter.

-Two more cousins.

+My Grandma Dake would be there.

=From Dorchester, Wisconsin.

+That made 14 people in all.

-It was a rather small house.

#As I recall.

-Dining room wasn’t big enough to accommodate all of us.

#So the children had to eat somewhere else.

\*Even when we got to be teenagers.

+We were still children.

#There was a children’s table in the kitchen.

#There were also TV trays.

\*We would set up in the living room.

+In front of the television.

=Where we could watch football.

-Green Bay Packers.

-Detroit Lions.

- We were scattered throughout the house.
- #Because there was no room at the table.

I. In Our Gospel Lesson There Was No Room At The Table.

A. Jesus Had Been Invited To The Home Of A Pharisee Named Simon.

1. That was considered an honor.
  - a. To be invited to someone else's home.
    - For a meal.
  - b. Jesus accepted the invitation.
2. Jesus took his place at the table.
  - a. Many dining tables were U-shaped.
    - Center of the table would be left open.
      - #So that the servants could move in and out.
    - Diners were arranged around the outside of the table.
  - b. Tables were low to the ground.
    - Mats were placed on the floor.
  - c. Diners would recline to eat.
    - Propped up on one elbow.
      - #Like children in front of the TV.
    - Their heads near the edge of the table.
      - #Their feet sticking out behind.

B. There Was Not Enough Room At The Table.

1. There was room for:
  - a. Simon.
  - b. Jesus.
  - c. Other invited guests.
2. But there was no room for a sinful woman.
  - a. We don't know her sin.
    - But she apparently had a reputation in the community.
  - b. There was no room for her at the table.
    - Because she hadn't even been invited to the dinner.
3. She was a party crasher.
  - a. She had heard that Jesus was in the house.
  - b. She crashed the party.
    - Uninvited.
  - c. She stood behind Jesus.
    - Where his feet would have been sticking out.
      - #Washing his feet with her tears.
      - #Wiping his feet with her hair.

4. Simon was more than a little put out.
  - a. Not just with this shady lady.
    - Crashing his party.
    - Fawning over Jesus.
  - b. But with Jesus.
    - If not reveling in her attentions.
    - Certainly not discouraging them, either.
  - c. Simon said to himself:
    - “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner.”
    - #Luke 7: 39.
  - d. In last week’s Gospel.
    - Luke 7: 11-17.
    - After Jesus had raised the widow of Nain’s son.
    - Crowds said:
      - #“A great prophet has risen among us.”
      - But now Simon is questioning that declaration.
5. Jesus, prophet that he is, knows what Simon is thinking.
  - a. Tells Simon a story.
    - Creditor.
    - #Who had two debtors.
      - \*One who owed 500 denarii.
        - +Denarius was a day’s wage.
      - \*One who owed 50 denarii.
        - +Neither of whom could repay their debts.
    - #Cancelled both debts.
    - Greek word for “cancel.”
    - #Has at its root the word “grace.”
    - \*Grace erase.
      - +Is how I would express it.
  - b. Jesus asks Simon a question:
    - “Now which of them will love him more?”
    - #Luke 7: 42.
  - c. Simon answers:
    - “I suppose the one for whom he cancelled the greater debt.”
    - #Luke 7: 43.
  - d. Jesus says:
    - “Bingo.”
    - “You got it right.”

6. Then Jesus gave Simon a lesson in hospitality and forgiveness.
  - a. Normally when a guest arrived at someone's home.
    - They would be greeted with a kiss.
    - As the appetizers were served.
    - #Servants would:
      - \*Wash:
        - +Hands.
        - +Feet.
        - =Of the guests.
      - \*Anoint them with perfume.
        - +To cover the smell of body odors.
  - b. "Do you see this woman?"
    - Jesus asks.
  - c. "When I came to your house,"
    - "You didn't greet me with a kiss."
    - "You didn't give me any water to wash my feet."
    - "You didn't anoint me with oil."
    - #Word that Jesus uses here means the cheap stuff.
  - d. "But ever since she's arrived,"
    - "She hasn't stopped kissing my feet."
    - "She washed my feet with her tears."
    - "She has anointed me with ointment."
    - #Word that Jesus uses here means the good stuff.
  - e. "One who is forgiven little."
    - "Loves little."
  - f. "She loves much,"
    - "Because she has been forgiven much."
7. Jesus says to her:
  - a. "Your sins are forgiven."
  - b. In his own way Jesus is saying:
    - "She belongs at this table."

## II. Who Is Welcome At Our Table?

### A. St. Louis Story.

1. Before Pam and I got married.
  - a. We belonged to two different Lutheran churches.
2. After we got married.
  - a. We still belonged to two different Lutheran churches.
    - She kept her membership at her church.
    - I kept my membership at my church.
  - b. It wasn't because of any power struggle.
    - Neither of us wishing to give in to the other.

- c. Each church had something that we valued.
  - Her church had a small group ministry.
    - #Pam was the leader of one of those groups.
    - #She had invited me to attend.
      - \*Which is how we got connected.
      - \*That became our group.
  - Her church had a Saturday evening service.
    - #We could worship together on Saturday evening.
      - \*Without that interfering with what I had going on.
        - +On Sunday morning.
  - My church was involved in Project COPE.
    - #Congregation.
    - #Offender.
    - #Partnership.
    - #Enterprise.
      - \*We adopted ex-offenders.
        - +Who were coming out of the penitentiary.
        - +Entered into a year-long partnership.
          - =As they got reintegrated into the community.
      - \*At one time our congregation had three teams.
        - +Sponsoring three different ex-offenders.
          - =Only church in the program.
            - That had more than one ex-offender.
      - \*Over the years.
        - +I was on a team.
          - =That worked with three different ex-offenders.
        - +We:
          - =Raised money.
          - =Bought groceries.
          - =Provided bus passes.
          - =Helped find jobs.
          - =Offered our friendship and our counsel.
        - +Those ex-offenders were welcome:
          - =In our church.
          - =In our homes.
          - =At our tables.
  - I thought it would be neat.
    - #If the small group.
      - \*Pam and I were involved in at her church.
      - \*Would join Project COPE.
      - \*Would sponsor an ex-offender.

- #But when I proposed that idea to our small group.
  - \*Did I ever get resistance!
    - #"What kinds of crimes did these people commit?"
    - #"How do we know they won't get in trouble again?"
    - #"If they get in trouble, will we be responsible?"
  - \*Our small group.
    - #Wasn't ready for Project COPE.
    - #Wasn't ready to welcome ex-offenders to their tables.

B. Jesus Welcomes Everyone To His Table.

1. Jesus has this giant grace eraser.
  - a. In the form of a cross.
  - b. Erasing our sins.
  - c. Canceling our debts.
  - d. Inviting us to the font in Holy Baptism.
    - Washing us with water.
    - Anointing us with oil.
  - e. Inviting us to the table.
    - Offering us the ultimate hospitality.
    - Feeding us his own body and blood.
    - #In the form of bread and wine.
  - f. That is good news for us.
2. Jesus' invitation is not limited to us.
  - a. In our Sunday bulletin we invite with these words:
    - “Holy Communion is OPEN to all baptized Christians acknowledging our Lord's presence in the sacrament, offering us forgiveness, life, and salvation.”
  - b. As I've asked before:
    - Who decided that the Lord's table should be open?
      - #It wasn't the pastor.
        - \*I have other responsibilities.
          - +When we have an organist to replace.
          - +When we have an air conditioner that needs repair.
          - +When we have an elevator that doesn't work.
        - #It wasn't the church council.
        - #It was the Lord himself.
          - \*Who is the host at the table.
  - c. That is good news for all.
    - No matter who the sinner.
    - No matter what the sin.
      - #As I read the Scriptures.
        - \*I don't see anything about:
          - +Big sins.
          - +Little sins.

- \*I don't think God has:
  - +Felonies.
  - +Misdemeanors.
    - =Class A.
    - =Class B.
    - =Class C.
    - =Class D.
  - If that's how Oklahoma laws are categorized.
- \*Sin is sin is sin is sin.
  - +It's all deadly.
    - =David's sin.
    - =Bathsheba's sin.
    - =Simon's sin.
    - =Sinful woman's sin.
    - =Your sin.
    - =My sin.
  - +It kills us.
  - +It killed Jesus.
- \*But with Easter morning.
  - +Out came the grace eraser.
    - =Forgiving sin.
    - =Canceling debts.
    - =Inviting us to the table.

Concl: After growing up in Stevens Point, Wisconsin.  
 -I attended the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

After graduation.

- I joined the Wisconsin Alumni Association.
  - #I became a lifetime member.
    - \*So I receive:
      - +Alumni magazine.
      - +Other publications.
  - This little clipping is a few years old.
    - #1993 Annual Report.
      - \*Of the University of Wisconsin Foundation.
    - #Announced a research grant.
      - \*To Professor Robert D. Enright.
        - +For a study of forgiveness.

#Enright said:

\*"Forgiveness is one of the virtually untried but very powerful ways to heal from bitterness, anger, and other problems that divide people and families. If we can devise and implement a forgiveness curriculum for families, I believe we may make a difference."

-I don't know how innovative.

#Professor Enright's ideas might be.

-But I would say:

#Whoever wants to focus on forgiveness.

\*Receiving.

\*Giving.

#Should be welcome at the table.