

A Hungry People, Part 1

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Date: 03 July 2022

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[0 : 00] Acts chapter 2 verses 42 to 47. Let's pray.

Our Father, we are grateful that your word is eternal. Lord, your word, not one bit of it will return to you empty.

It will accomplish all that you will. It is why it is so crucial that we preach it, teach it, read it, meditate upon it, believe it, trust in it, and live it.

And we need your help because the world is always telling us there's something better. It's always telling us to doubt what your word says.

And to be honest, Lord, sometimes we just got our minds on other things. Help us. Help us to see the glory and majesty of your word because it shows us your glory and majesty.

[1 : 15] Help us to believe it and pour out your spirit on us that, Lord, we might live it more accurately and clearly as we follow Jesus.

Help us. Make us people of the book because we are the people of Jesus. Use your unworthy servant to proclaim this word for your glory, for your honor, and for your pleasure and bless your people in Jesus' name.

Amen. Acts 2, 42 to 47. Once again, reading the entire context. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

And awe came upon every soul. Many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. All who believed were together had all things in common. They were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing their proceeds to all as any had need.

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.

[2 : 40] And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. That is the word of the Lord and our hope. Thanks be to God. Please be seated.

I know some of you have probably asked, remember these kinds of way of thinking. Where were you when, right? Where were you when President Kennedy was shot?

Where were you when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated? Where were you on 9-11? I remember that one more clearly.

Where were you when Roe v. Wade was overturned? Those are watershed moments in our nation. Some of it all of it shocking.

None of it we thought would ever happen. And if you're like me, you never thought Roe v. Wade would be overturned in this country. But here we are. But what about the church?

[3 : 57] You see, laws are good and we need good laws. And this is a good law that was finally, you know, finally brought to our federal, through our federal courts.

What about the church? Laws don't save people. Good laws are helpful.

They restrain evil. That's what the law is given for. They restrain evil. But they don't save people. We got work to do, saints. We got real work to do still.

That's a, that's actually a minor battle compared to the big battle for the souls of those same children who will be spared.

And for their parents. and for our parents and friends and neighbors. What about the church?

[5 : 04] My president, my seminary president, T.M. Moore, he was also one of my professors. Man, that guy taught me so many courses, all of my languages. He was an amazing man of God.

He had a little book called Preparing Your Church for Revival. He wrote these words. Now, he's speaking of the comparison of the church and acts with the church today.

He said, the difference between us and them is simple. They were a revived people. A people filled with and led by the Holy Spirit of God who drew them into ever deeper levels of Christian life and

witness.

They were not only alive but alive in Christ and daily renewed in him such that he became the focus and end of all their activities.

they completely defined themselves in terms of their lives in him. They, their non-Christian neighbors, called them Christians because as the people saw it, he was clearly what they were all about.

[6 : 08] End quote. They were a revived church. This is what we're studying in the Spirit-filled, the Spirit-filled, revived church here in the book of Acts.

And a revived church is a worshipping church. But a church cannot be revived unless she begins to cry out to God for the Spirit of his Son to come upon her with power.

A new city, we are in need of God's power and presence to be felt among us in a new way. We need some fire in our souls. I need fire in my soul.

So let's aim for this. As we come to this wonderful passage, yes, please understand, I read it every week, but I'm not preaching the same message every week.

I read it every week so that you will have it in your mind, the entire context, because I'm not taking things out of context. I want you to see it for yourself. I want you to, I want this passage to be tattooed on your memory as it is on mine.

[7 : 21] This is devotion that we need as the people of God today. We need this kind of devotion right here in the book of Acts, and now we need deep worship.

Deep worship as we wait for the Spirit to come to become a people saturated with God who are, to use that word I've been using, addicted. And this morning and next week, addicted to worship.

And key to our worship is the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, believe it or not. It expresses our hunger for God and our commitment to life.

life. So this morning, are you hungry? Are you hungry? When I speak of being devoted to worship, I'm speaking of the last two elements.

Several commentators lump them together and talk about worship. I said, I'd go along with that.

Devotion to the breaking of bread and the prayers. True, two very serious and important elements of worship.

[8 : 35] There are references to what happens as we gather together in the fellowship. Worship speaks of declaring literally the worth of God. We praise Him and surrender ourselves to Him to follow Jesus wherever He leads.

And see, hunger for God in the fellowship means we will not easily let anything keep us from it. because when the church gathers together, brothers and sisters, we are not just gathering with one another.

I think we have, sometimes we have a low view of worship, of gathered worship. We're not just gathering together. We are gathering together in the presence of God.

He is present with us. How we conduct ourselves in this space is supremely important because we have said we are gathering not as a club or a small group, but as the body of Christ at the feet of our Heavenly Father and the power of the Spirit in the name of Jesus according to the Word of God. Word and sacrament go forth. This is special. This is different from anything you do throughout your week. That's why we must pray for God's presence as we come together.

[10 : 00] We sing with the psalmist in Psalm 122, I was glad when they said unto me, let us go to the house of the Lord. It's striking though that we are the house gathering in a house.

We sing Psalm 42, one of the four, the panting and thirsting for God. you know, it's connected to the house.

David was longing and panting and thirsting to be in that place of worship. And of course in Hebrews 10 we remember that it's let us, when we gather we consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.

We're not neglecting to meet together as some of them have begun to do but encourage one another and all the more as we see the day of Christ. that today is the day of Christ drawing near. We are, when we gather we are looking forward to the coming of Jesus. And because that coming is real to us we gather sincerely.

[11 : 03] We must gather and we gather to encourage and strengthen and stir up one another.

These truths. That's why you see Christians throughout the ages including today especially under persecution risking their very lives to gather and worship.

That's the work of the spirit in us. He gives us a hunger. A hunger for the courts of the Lord as it were.

A hunger for that place where Jesus is named unashamedly and publicly and where you and I come away from our worldly concern worldly occupations and we come and we say Lord this is a holy moment.

This moment is yours. Work in us. Strengthen us. Encourage us. Heal us.

Teach us. Train us. Put us back together and then send us back out to do your will. I was glad and he said unto me let's go to church.

[12:28] But in that church is this meal. Let's be clear that the phrase the breaking of bread here is not likely a reference to an ordinary meal. There's debate about this.

I'm only mentioning it because there is debate about it. Some scholars believe that Luke is talking about the fellowship meal. He's going to talk about that down in verse 46 I believe.

But I think here he's talking really about not the article the breaking of bread. He's talking about the Lord's supper. He's talking about something that is special. Remember do you know how a Jewish man would the head of his house would begin a meal?

He would take bread and break it and that would be his way of beginning a meal with his family and friends. Breaking of bread. And yet Jesus takes hold of this custom.

He takes hold of this whole idea and brings to it a deeper meaning. I'm going to explain as we go along. He makes this breaking of bread so significant and so deep and so important to the life of the people of God.

[13:44] When Jesus gets hold of a custom he transforms it. And see what we notice here and I'm going to spend time on this because this is kind of a preliminary to next week's message.

What he does here is he enters into what was called table fellowship. You know we talk about doing lunch. You know other parts of the world meal time is special and back in these days the Jewish people meals were special moments.

They didn't just do lunch. They didn't just grab a grub. When they ate together it was a sign of something very important. You came under the protection of the people of that home if you ate with them.

If they invited you to meal. So supper time, this meal time was very important and I want you to notice today, this is what I want you to focus on today, that throughout the Bible God takes meals and makes them significant.

And so today I'm going to walk you through and these verses will not be on the screen. I hope you have your Bible. Hopefully you can turn with me. But we're going to walk through five instances where we see God dealing with meals among his people.

[15:06] And then we're going to end here. I hope it comes together. If not, it's Pastor Billy's fault. God's pursuit of table fellowship in the scriptures tells us something about him.

So I've got five tables here. I want you to know it's five tables. The first table, and the word table is not always used, but you'll get the idea.

Five tables. The first table I want you to notice is in Genesis chapter 2. The first table is in the garden. Genesis chapter 2, 15 to 17.

If you're taking notes, you can write that down. In that passage, the Bible says this, the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man saying, you may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat.

From the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die. Here's a wonderful example of God setting the table.

[16:18] He goes to Adam and Eve and says, the table is spread. God said, you can eat from any tree of the garden, any of these fruit trees.

All of them are for your nourishment and enjoyment as my children. But there was a restriction.

There was one tree that God said, you can't eat of that tree.

It's forbidden. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Well, you know what happened? They ate of the tree. They wanted what was not on the menu.

You ever go to a restaurant and order off the menu? I do that at P.F. Chang's because I know the menu so well. I go in and I'll say, listen, no, no, no, I don't want this.

Give me. And they know exactly because they have it. They can make it. It's been on the menu before. But ordering off of God's menu is never a good idea.

[17 : 22] Keep that in mind. About when you look at your own desires and wants. Are you ordering off of God's menu?

My wife, I told you this before, but my wife told my kids, they come in exhausted, been playing outside, starving. Parents, help me out here.

Starving. And they come in and they say, Mom, we've been outside playing so long, working so hard. We are so famished. We are dying of hunger.

What's for dinner? And she would say something and they would go, oh, I don't want, and she would say two words, oh, three words actually.

It's what's provided. provided. It was in the story. In the garden, God says, this is what's provided. He says it to you every day.

[18 : 23] This is what I'm providing. Stay on the menu. While they got off the menu, they thought they could create their own meal.

God's menu wasn't good enough for them. And you know what the rest of the story, here we are in sin and rebellion against God. He set the table as the entire garden.

Can you, just let that blow your mind for a minute. He set the table so beautifully. I mean, there were chandeliers, there was candles, there was nice, you know, he set the table.

He gave them, I mean, they had the fruit that all, you probably hadn't even seen before. It was amazing fruit, perfect fruit, no pesticides, and they blew their, they thumbed their nose at it and said, no, we want what's forbidden.

Their story ends with guilt and shame, but still hope, and that God would send a savior. Now, there was one, there was one other prohibition placed on them, by the way.

[19 : 37] There was another tree that they were not allowed to eat from. Do you remember that? It's in chapter 4. The Lord God said, behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.

Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever. Therefore, the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. That was one of a tree they were not allowed to eat from. Because they had failed the test and life was denied them.

That's the first table. It ended in guilt and shame. The second table is the Passover and you'll see this in Exodus chapter 12.

Wonderful passage. And there's several verses there I'm going to refer you to. Exodus chapter 12, verse 3. God is, remember, this is the final plague upon Egypt. God is delivering his people from slavery and this is it.

[20 : 45] This is the big one. This is when the death angel will pass upon all the firstborn of Egypt, the final straw that breaks the back of Egypt. But God is going to protect his people.

Tell all the congregation, verse 3, of Israel, that on the tenth day of this month, every man shall take a lamb, according to their father's house, a lamb for a household.

Seventy-nine, then they shall take some of the blood, they're going to kill the lamb, put it on the two doorposts, and the lintel of the house in which they eat it. They shall eat the flesh that night, roast it on the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, they shall eat it.

Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roast it his head with his legs and his inner part. In verses 11-14, in this manner you shall eat it with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, your staff in your hand, you shall eat it in haste.

It is the Lord's Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast, and on all gods of Egypt, listen to this, on all the gods of Egypt, I will execute judgments.

[22 : 04] I am the Lord. What was God doing with Egypt? He was executing their gods. Those ten plagues were about their gods. He was showing that he alone is the Lord.

He alone is God. The blood shall be assigned for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

This day shall be for you a memorial day. You shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations as a statute forever. You shall keep it as a feast.

Briefly here, because we're going to come back to this next week, I think. Here again, God sets the table. He prepares a meal, a meal that will fellowship with his people.

Just as he fellowshiped with Adam and Eve in the garden, when he set the table for them, he is now coming to fellowship again with his people, but to protect them from his judgment upon those who sought to keep them in slavery.

[23 : 11] The blood of the lamb covered their sin so that the death angel would pass over them. Then they ate the lamb in the Lord's presence.

God spread a table for them. The third table I want you to know is the shepherd's table. I mention this because it is part of the most well-known psalm.

The psalm that everybody knows. Even people who don't believe the Bible or know the Lord know Psalm 23. Therefore, I think it's significant to the people of God throughout all generations and in that psalm, speaking of God, the good shepherd David sang this, you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

That's verse five. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies?

Now, most scholars seem to think that he's talking about what happens for the sheep when they get up in what's called the table land and the shepherd would go ahead of them and prepare that area. He would go ahead of them before he even took the sheep there.

[24 : 30] He would go ahead of them and clean it up, make it nice and good so that the sheep could come and graze in safety. He would put oil upon them, taking care of their parasites and all things that sheep go through.

Sheep life was hard. And so the anointing of oil, but he also prepared a cup, a cup of wine as it were, to refresh the people of God.

It's like God is saying, hey, I'm going to go ahead of you. You're my sheep and I'm going to go ahead of you and I'm going to prepare the way for you and even though there may be enemies around, I'm going to set a table for you.

I'm going to give you a place of rest, a place of nourishment, a place of refreshment, a place of healing, even in the presence of those who hate you. The table shows us how God provides for us in difficult times, even among difficult people who mean us harm.

He brings soothing oil to our soul and joyful wine to our hearts. We need the table. Some of you right now are probably saying, Lord, I need that table.

[25 : 57] But then the Bible ends at another table. And again, the word table is not used, but it's evident. the Bible ends in Revelation chapter 19.

A couple more chapters left, but this is near the end of the book of Revelation. The Bible ends at the table of a wedding party. This is the final destiny of all the Lord's redeemed.

In Revelation chapter 19, verses 6 through 10, listen to what you read. Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters, like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, Hallelujah, for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. It was granted to her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure, for the linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

Angel said, write, blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. He said to me, these are the words of the true words of God.

[27 : 10] Then I fell face down to worship him, but he said to me, you must not do that. I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God, for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

here we are destined for the Lord's table at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Here the redeemed from all generation burst out in the loudest crowd noise in human history. But it wasn't a sporting event that they were shouting about.

They rejoiced and gave praise to the Lord, the Lord of glory for his mighty triumph and reign over all the forces of darkness. The church herself, she was once, each member was once part of the darkness but found grace in the sight of the Lord and received his invitation to this great supper.

Do you have your invitation? salvation. But how? How can sinners be invited to the wedding supper, the reception, the marriage wedding feast?

[28 : 23] How do sinners get invited to this wonderful event? We're all prone to wander and sin but the bride, the Bible says here that the bride made herself ready in verse seven.

The bride made herself ready? Ready? Ready? Wow. She saved herself. No way.

You know. She was able to make herself ready by a grant or a gift of the wedding gown that God sent to her in verse eight.

Remember? You see it again? It was granted to her to clothe herself with fine linen bright and pure for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

Don't you get it? She said yes to the dress. Have you said yes to the dress? Are you clothed?

[29 : 26] What are you going to show up in? Where are you going to stand before God wearing? The rags of your self righteousness? Or will you show up in the dress that God has given his people, the church, the righteousness of Christ?

Will you show up at the marriage supper, at the wedding feast, at the reception? Are you going to show up in your Sunday best? Or will you show up in that righteous white linen he describes here? That's what it looked like to him. It doesn't mean it was actually linen. It looked like fine linen, but it was bright and pure. She was dressed to the nines because she was dressed by God himself and presented to Jesus, the Lord of glory, the great bridegroom.

She was saved by the gracious gift of righteousness that then worked itself out in deeds of righteousness. That's when you know you're saved.

because your life changes. God begins to show up in you. Rick Phillips, my dear brother, says in his commentary, this probably refers to especially to acts of mercy and love that we offer through the grace of Christ.

[30 : 49] We mirror the mercy that Jesus showed to the weak and broken and the grace by which we are all forgiven. That's what he's talking about. See, this righteous deeds, they were deeds of love and service and mercy.

because life was no longer just about you. We give ourselves. Give ourselves to the work of the Lord because we have been invited to the table.

Because the table, that marriage supper is our destiny. We right now live out the reality of Jesus among us.

One thing about Revelation, I'm struck that in chapter 22 verse 2, that other tree shows up again. The one that they were prohibited from taking, the tree of life, it shows up in the couple chapters over and now, guess what?

We get to eat the fruit and the leaves of that tree heal us. Wow! All of these tables, there are probably a couple more, but I think these five speak to me.

[32 : 05] All of these tables speak of God's desire, but hold it, hold it, there's one more table. Brother, we have it there's one more. the breaking of bread in Acts chapter 2 42, the breaking of bread is the table that secures all the others.

Everything I just read to you becomes ours because we eat at this table. Without this table, you get none of the other things I just mentioned.

The shame and the guilt are now erased. The blessings of full deliverance because Jesus is our Passover lamb are realized.

Our destiny for the glorious wedding supper is secured at this table because this table, this breaking of bread in our passage brings to our senses and souls the reality of the death of Jesus for us. we participate in his death and therefore his resurrection power right now as we come to the table. This table is huge.

[33 : 27] My buddy Rick again, this awareness of the coming feast in glory should spiritually enliven the gathering of the church during our celebration of the Lord's Supper.

future. It's because when we come to this table, we know this is a foretaste of the table to come in glory in the new heavens and earth where we will gather as the bride of Christ and celebrate finally his full victory on our behalf.

This table, do you see it? This table prepares us for that moment and for all eternity. Douglas Kelly, one theologian I've met over the years, even before God created the world, it was his plan to make a world and to create a race of beings who would be like his son so they could share fellowship with the triune God.

The almighty father planned to give his son the finest gift a father could give his son, a beautiful bride. Why did God make the world? He asked. Why did he put me and you in it?

He asked. It was because he wanted his son to have a marvelous bride and he has invited you and me to be a part of that. The world was created that the son might have a bride and you and I are part of that bride and when we come to this table, when we celebrate the death of Jesus, looking forward to the coming of Jesus, we are celebrating the reality for which we were created, for intimacy.

[35 : 06] Listen, table fellowship means intimacy with God. It means we participate, we fellowship with him. We experience with our senses, our taste buds, and with our fingers when we touch, we experience the reality with our senses of his death and dying for us, rising again for us and preparing a kingdom for us and the coming kingdom for us and our day when we will stand before him, dressed all in his righteousness.

But how do we come to the table? How do you come to the table? What's on your mind when you come to the table? Do you see it as a crucial element of your faith? Do you see it as a crucial moment of your fellowship with God? Do you see it as that moment when God, in a special way, nourishes your soul? How do you come to the table? Jesus was always going from meal to meal. Study the gospel of Luke. Meal to meal.

Because in those meals he had fellowship with people. People from the other side of the track sometimes. People who were considered traitors. He ate with sinners.

[36 : 37] He ate with sinners. He had intimate table fellowship with sinful people, messed up people, people who didn't have their act together, people who said things they shouldn't say, people like you and me.

But it was at those tables that he taught. Revealed grace, revealed kingdom, revealed great love, forgiveness and acceptance. When you come to this table, the host is not Kevin Smith or New City Fellowship or the Presbyterian Church in America.

The host at the table is named Jesus. He's the host and he's the feast. How do you come to the table?

this was supposed to be last week's message, would have been perfect. But in God's providence, prepare for next time.

Read this, can I just, three things, time is, praise team, come on up guys. If you're here, come on, you can hear me, come on up. Because we're running over time and I got up really late and I wanted to finish this. Forgive me, I meant no disrespect to anyone.

[37 : 46] Can I just encourage you just a few practical thoughts again. Read the scriptures, saints. Not just noting what Jesus does, but look at what motivates Jesus.

Ask yourself what is motivating him and then receive that motivation into your own heart. Why does he do what he do? Receive it. Prepare in advance for the Lord's Supper.

Asking for God's presence to meet us. Come anticipating his holy joyful presence. Stop coming to the table distracted and if it doesn't matter if we're just crackers and juice, that's much more.

And can I encourage you to study the attributes of God in scripture? Look up his mercy. Look up the love of God. Look up the holiness of God. Check out good books on the subject, which I can recommend if you and many of us could too as well.

We don't want to just know about God. We want to know God. Intimacy. And this table is part of how he brings us to intimacy with him.

[39 : 01] Father, in Jesus' name, bless your people and help us to seek true intimacy with you. Not just at the table, but every day. But Lord, especially at these times as we come to the table, in Jesus' name, amen.

Amen.