

**Sermon for Sunday August 31, 2025**  
**Luke 14:7-14**  
**“Table Talk”**

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you,  
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen

During my postulancy (a training period while working to become an Anglican priest), I spent a year visiting various churches around the city. My goal was to quietly sneak in, observe worship and preaching, take notes of what I liked and didn't like about it all, and quietly sneak back out again. What I found interesting was the rarity at which I was approached. I was a stranger to these churches. I wasn't a face seen in the pews each week. And yet, it was a rare occasion when someone greeted me. I was quite surprised, but perhaps I was spoiled. I come from a parish whose greeters knew every parishioner and when someone new arrived, they were given a handshake, asked what brought them there, and then directed as to how to follow along with the bulletin during worship.

The church can be a great source of community, a community of mutual love. This mutual love is the foundation of doing good and sharing what you have. This mutual love is the foundation of being in relationship with God, and with each other. Our ministry of community stems from worship and fellowship. As leaders in our church, we are tasked with making the space inclusive and welcoming – in words and in actions. It is not our job to gate keep or to guard the pews. We do not get to decide who is allowed to be part of the community and who is to be kept outside. And the main place of that inclusivity is at the table. We call ourselves Christians, but Jesus Christ did not create the Christian church. I'll leave that as a lesson for another time, but my point is that while Jesus may not have birthed a church, he did birth a table. A table at which he even included his betrayer.

Luke's gospel includes more meal-time scenes than all the others, with several stories ending with a festive meal. A couple of examples are the parable of the prodigal son in chapter 15 and the ultimate meal of the Last Supper in chapter 22. For Luke, eating around the table is the place where lessons are learned, where there is intimacy and relationship, and where it is made clear that everyone is allowed to be there.

This intimacy and relationship can be found around our own kitchen and dining room tables. Whether it be with family or friends, gathering around the table, eating

dinner together, sharing stories from their days with each other – this all leads to loving and meaningful relationships. The sharing of meals brings people closer together, and it also gives us the opportunity to possibly meet people we may not have met before, bringing inclusivity to that table. I read somewhere that rather than limiting the seats at the table, just make the table bigger.

That is what Christ's table is all about – being open to everyone. Later on in the service, listen closely to the words of invitation to communion that I will be saying. Listen, and take them to heart. Christ has invited everyone to join him at the table. Our job is to make more room at the table, and to ensure that we are making room for all, not a select few. We are creating a loving community in order to follow in the loving footsteps of Jesus Christ.

Making room for the stranger may upset the balance of the church, but opening the doors of the church is not meant to be a threatening situation. Making room for the stranger reaffirms the humanity of all persons. Our humanity is not based upon the ability to walk upright on two legs, or on our intelligence quotient, or on our capacity for knowledge. What it means to be human is shaped by our understanding of the importance of the community and the affirmation that we are all created in the image of God. Each of us springs forth from the imagination of God regardless of who we are.

Jesus spent his whole life breaking down barriers and bringing forth the inclusive love of God. We are all called to the same generosity in sharing that love with everyone we meet. We have a chance to show that generosity every day, and especially on Sundays when we have a banquet in Jesus' name. The invitation to this banquet, to Jesus' table, must be inclusive, with no exceptions – featuring a welcome to share in the ministry of Word and Sacrament, as well as the many other ways that the church enriches people's lives. As Christians and as the leaders of St Peter's, we are on duty as hospitable servants of Christ. We are to welcome not only one another but also outsiders and the abundance of people waiting on the margins.

When we give a banquet in the name of Jesus, both the doors and our arms must be open wide. As we will sing in our final hymn,

“Draw the circle wide.  
Draw it wider still.  
Let this be our song,  
no one stands alone,

standing side by side,  
draw the circle wide.”

God, help us to celebrate a life of love-filled community by seeing others through your eyes of grace-filled mercy. May we grow in our awareness of your love, so that we may act with openness of heart to others, seeing them as your beloved children.

Amen.