

*Based on *Luke 14:12-14. A Real Sunday Brunch*

**translation below*

Imagine through a series of unfortunate events, you have landed in southern Turkey in the late 1930s, in a race against Nazis, your father - Sean Connery - mortally wounded, and his only hope for help buried deep inside a cavern guarded by deadly booby traps that no one has been able to pass for 700 years.

I am talking, of course, about the Harrison Ford movie classic from the 80s: *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*.

By hook or by crook, we make our way with Indy through fast-moving saw blades, a word puzzle, and a hidden bridge over a bottomless pit, only to arrive in a guarded chamber with one final test to surpass them all: among dozens of false Holy Grails of every design imaginable, we must choose the one true Grail. The legendary cup used by Jesus during his Last Supper with his disciples.

Choose wisely, and we will gain eternal life.

Choose falsely, and we will die.

In the scene at the end, Indiana, with his quick thinking biblical scholarship, channels the teaching of Jesus in today's Lesson - about the honor of feasting with those who are privileged in the reign of God, but humbled in the ways of the world - and, instead of reaching for any one of the many gilded gold and silver and ruby masterpieces, seeks out, instead, a simple clay cup, and is rewarded for it. ...

The next time you host a fancy meals, Jesus says, honor those who are poor and low wealth, those who cannot seem to catch a break, the ones without access to healthcare or 401(k)s, the beaten up and the broken down.

Which is a far cry from the Sabbath meal - the Shabbas Dinner - Jesus finds himself attending, on his way from Galilee to Jerusalem, at the home of a leader of the Pharisees, as our Lesson begins, where the standard protocol unfolds in full force: a seat of honor for the most distinguished guest, rituals of redemption sung and spoken, a carefully cooked kosher meal laid out in all its finery.

Which is not, to be sure, anything you and I have a right to criticize. The average first century Pharisee is, after all, not all that different from the average North American middle class Protestant. Basically decent people, trying to do right by God and one another. Making our way, generally speaking, through the world, with some stress, to be sure, but with a whole lot of opportunity as well.

The world as they know it, generally works for the Pharisees, as it generally works for us, or at least we have figured out a way to make it work, and we have generally made our peace with whatever compromises or (un)intentional blind spots we must carry in order to maintain some semblance of sanity.

And the Sabbath is a day for celebration, to be sure, with our Sunday best laundered and pressed, and a pot roast in the oven (for those winter feasts, of course, not for today's last summer heat gasp). We might even bring out the silver and the fine china to celebrate getting through the first week back to school.

And if we are moderately devout, we might say grace or sing a prayer or just generally express words of gratitude to God for the blessings of this life.

And there would be nothing wrong with that! In fact, there would be everything right with that! I hope you do it today! We have every reason to feast and rest and enjoy the late summer Sunday and put off thinking about the early Monday alarm as long as possible. Right up until Jesus points out - perhaps lovingly, perhaps with a hint of contempt - that maybe we have missed the point.

The thing is, Jesus has spent the past three years of his life intentionally homeless, roaming the region of Galilee - which in today's parlance you and I would call *the sticks* - telling people who are poor that the reign of God is about to lift them up. Telling people who are outcast that the reign of God is about to place them at the center. Telling people who are bound up in debt that the reign of God is about to liberate them. Telling people who are blind that the reign of God is about to buy them glasses.

Jesus has spent the past three years of his life not just preaching these words from a pulpit on high but actually living these words with them at their tables, through their shared meals, inside their homes. Jesus knows and loves the very people the reign of God has come to rescue.

And he just can't get their stories out of his head.

The Sabbath is a celebration of freedom! Jesus has learned, as he has broken bread with the beaten up and broken down. The Sabbath memorializes liberation from bondage in its rituals and its prayers. Not just as a reminder of what God did through the Exodus from Egypt, but as a promise that God is working overtime through all time to do the same today!

That message has power when it is proclaimed among those who hunger and thirst in their bodies. Jesus has lived that power in his ministry in one small part of the world. But when Jesus joins this particular leader of the Pharisees for his version of Sunday Brunch all of the power and possibility of the meal they say they share seems to evaporate. Not really through any fault of their own, I would venture to guess. Just because they have never really had to live in this world with the same kind of holding on to hope, when hope seems hopelessness, as those who suffer the most.

For that reason, Jesus says, you are missing what the reign of God is really all about, again through no fault of your own. In your universe it is only natural to compare yourselves with the so-called *best and brightest*, the ones we call *successful*, the ones with nice big houses and multiple cars, the ones who wear nice clothes and buy up all the latest tech gadgets, and you find yourselves wanting. In your universe, it is only natural to believe those things are the source of your value.

They are not.

The myth of scarcity permeating your culture has infiltrated your soul, Jesus is saying, without you even knowing it. And yes, of course, I get it, Jesus is saying, inflation is kicking your rear, and let's not even talk about your credit card balance.

But have you ever actually sat down with someone who comes from nothing and expects not much more? Have you shared a meal with someone who is grateful for rice and beans on a steady basis? Have you heard the story of an immigrant whose life in this country you would never choose, but who tells you in no uncertain terms it is far better than the life they left behind and they would never go back, even if it means they have to go into hiding to stay?

If not, Jesus is saying, you really are missing what the reign of God is all about. Which is radical solidarity with those who suffer most. A way of looking at the world from the perspective of the ones with the least power. And a recommitment to the heavenly banquet where all are fed in overflowing abundance. Bread for those who hunger and a hunger for justice for those who are satisfied.

It turns out we at SPC don't have to work very hard to follow the teaching of Jesus in our Lesson today. In just one week, you and I are invited to the joyful feast of the people of God: the monthly Community Dinner at Zion Episcopal Church, next Sunday 5pm.

I plan to be there. And I hope you will join me. We don't have to race against the Nazis, like Indiana Jones. We don't have to survive fast-moving saw blades, a word puzzle, and a hidden bridge over a bottomless pit, only to arrive in a guarded chamber with one final test to surpass them all.

We *will* find, however, that the one true Grail appears to us in all of its glory: the simple cup of clay that is our common humanity. And when we drink of that cup, we will find eternal life. And perhaps together, as we commune with God and one another, through the stories of the people we encounter, we might join them in praying:

Some have food; others have none; God bless the revolution!

Luke 14:12-14

A leader of the Pharisees invites Jesus to a Sabbath meal at his house. Jesus notices the formality of the meal, the places of honor established for each guest, the attention to detail, and the finery of it all.

Jesus says to the one who has invited him,

“The next time you host a fancy meal,
instead of honoring your friends or your family
or your wealthy neighbors,
in a perpetual reciprocal cycle we call
‘keeping up with the Joneses,’
honor instead those who are poor and low wealth,
those who can’t seem to catch a break,
those without access to healthcare,
the beaten up and the broken down.
You won’t believe the blessing *they* will offer *you*.
It will be as if the reign of God has already come.”