



Come to the Table

October - November

FaithWestwood UMC Study Guide 2025

In **October & November**, our sermon series explores Gospel stories around the table – Jesus eating with his disciples, sinners, and religious leaders. Jesus then expands people’s perceptions about what’s most important. How do you and I need to expand our personal tables to say to others, **Come to the Table**?

This guide may be utilized by FaithGroups and/or Individuals.

If you would like to connect with a FaithGroup on-site and/or online, please check out the latest **GROW Catalog** on our website faithwestwood.com

Preparing for FaithCommitments for 2026 / more info on **page 2.**
Stewardship Challenge / look at the **end** of each lesson
Mission Offerings & Activities / look for the **“GOLDEN”** banner on **page 16.**
Family Activities / see ivory colored **insert**



© 2025, Study Guide by Rev. Cindi Stewart for FaithWestwood
United Methodist Church, October 5 to November 23, 2025
Mission Offerings & Activities by Director of Caring Ministries Vikki O’Hara
Family Activities (insert) by Director of Family Ministry Leah Dinoso



The Making of Come to the Table and its Video...

The **Come to the Table** sermon series was inspired by: **Gospel** passages, the books **A Bigger Table** and **Food As....** and a Canadian commercial inviting people to eat together (search #EatTogether).

Because of livestream limitations and copyright issues, Rev. Cindi & Shane decided to recreate the video for FaithWestwood using the Micah Center hallway when it was “empty” and being prepared for our new community partner, Mosaic. Please extend your gratitude to: **MidWeek Meals participants, Sam Lawson, and Worship Band.**

Preparing Faith Commitments for 2026

As we prepare to make our Faith Commitments for 2026:

Pray for our congregation, our ministries, and those we serve in the name of Jesus Christ.

**Be in a spirit of gratitude for all God has done in and through our church,
and for all that He has planned for us in the future.**

**Prayerfully consider how you will support FaithWestwood in 2026
with your prayers, presence, service, witness, and financial gifts.**

Attend one of the 2026 Vision & Budget Preview meetings:

Sunday, October 19 at 10 am and Noon (Chapel)

Wednesday, October 22 at 5:30 pm (Fellowship Hall during MidWeek Meals)

Sunday, October 26 at 10 am (Chapel)

**Pick up your FaithCommitment letter & sheet in worship on October 26
(those letters not picked up will be mailed on October 27).**

**Attend worship IN-PERSON on November 9 when we will bring our Faith Commitment
sheets forward during each service.**

If you are unable to attend worship on **November 9**, or if you worship with us online,
please fill form out online and/or to mail your commitment sheet back in the return envelope
provided no later than **December 1**.

Week of October 5 / Bread of Life

World Communion Sunday

Message Focus: After feeding the crowds, the people look for Jesus, and he proclaims that he is the Bread of Life. In a world looking for quick fixes, how can you seek spiritual food that will satisfy?

John 6:25-35 (NIV) / ²⁵When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?” ²⁶Jesus answered, “**Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.** ²⁷**Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.**” ²⁸Then they asked him, “**What must we do to do the works God requires?**” ²⁹Jesus answered, “**The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.**”

³⁰So they asked him, “**What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?**” ³¹Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” ³²Jesus said to them, “**Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.**” ³³**For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.**”

³⁴“Sir,” they said, “**always give us this bread.**” ³⁵Then Jesus declared, “**I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.**”

Opening

- Intro: Think about a time when you had the **BEST bread** of your life & spill the crumbs about who made it, when you ate it, etc. (apologies to those who are gluten-free).
- Pray: **Bread of Life, I come to you hungry for food which does not spoil, will satisfy, and will last into eternity. Feed me till I am in want no more. AMEN.**

Observing

- Background: earlier in John 6, Jesus **fed the multitudes with many leftovers**. Our focus passage represents the proverbial “middle” of the story which even continues beyond verse 35. (Need more conversation today? Go back to these verses)
- Read **John 6:25-29**. The people sought out Jesus “on the other side of the lake” and then begin with, “**Rabbi, when did you get here?**” What does this question say to you about their seeking? (more bread, more miracles, or more of the Rabbi?)
- Jesus speaks the truth about their seeking. What does it mean to **work for food that endures to eternal life**? What does it mean to **believe** in him?
- Read **John 6:30-35**. As the people long for a sign to believe (like manna in the wilderness), Jesus proclaims how the Father gives the bread. How does Jesus use the **metaphor of bread** to help the people understand his relationship with his Father?
- As Jesus proclaims that he is the **Bread of Life**, this statement is beyond what **temporarily satisfies**. So how does Jesus invite the people to claim something eternal?

Reflecting

- Think about the phrase **“do not work for the food that spoils”** – what would this have looked like in Jesus’ day in contrast to our own (sandals vs. name brand shoes).
- Name and reflect on the secular and sacred **reasons** why people work.
- Have you ever asked God for a **spiritual sign**? What **signs** of God’s love, grace, care, and/or mercy have been revealed to you?
- When in your **faith journey** did you come to **believe in Jesus**? What does **eternal life** mean to you? (even if you have shared/reflected on these in the past, repeating them continues to inform your faith testimony and/or “elevator speech”).

Sending Forth

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, read and/or sing UMH #641, Fill My Cup, Lord:
♪ **Fill my cup, Lord, I lift it up, Lord. Come and quench this thirsting of my soul. Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more. Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole. AMEN.**
- **Stewardship Challenge for the Week**: Reflect/journal on **“why”** you currently work (if blessed to be retired or redirected, consider the **“why”** you previously worked). **“Stay at home”** is work too!

Week of October 12 / Empty Hands, Full Hearts

Message Focus: Jesus sends out 70+ saying “the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.”
Those sent were invited to eat and drink what was given to them.
How do you trust in God’s provision when serving Christ?

Luke 10:1-11 (NIV) / 10 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ² He told them, **“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. ³ Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. ⁴ Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.**

⁵ **“When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ ⁶ If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. ⁷ Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.**

⁸ **“When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. ⁹ Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰ But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ¹¹ ‘Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.’”**

Opening

- Intro: Share about a **“sending forth” time** – recent Outside the Walls, volunteer and/or service opportunities – and what you experienced (both lamb and wolf experiences welcome).
- Pray: **Almighty God, we ask the Lord of the harvest to send us forth, in mission and ministry to our corner of the world. May we be willing to accept this invitation to go, even like lambs among the wolves. Equip us for the tasks ahead, and may we eat what is offered to us, remembering the Kingdom before us! AMEN.**

Observing

- Read **Luke 10:1-4**. Jesus needs workers for the plentiful harvest, yet there are costs. What does it mean to be sent out like **lambs among wolves**?
- Read **Luke 10:5-7**. When entering a house, extending **peace** is important as well as not moving from house to house – what is Jesus trying to accomplish with these concepts?
- Jesus insists that **eating and drinking whatever is given to you** is part of the **worker experience** – how does this emphasize how **God provides** what is needed?
- Read **Luke 10:8-11**. Then when entering a town, a welcome warrants doing what?! Why would these two things be most important?
- Yet if not welcomed in a town, notice how a **spoken warning** is to be extended. Why do you believe Jesus emphasized this approach?

Reflecting

- In **verses 1-4**, there are so many power quotes – which have you quoted most & why: **“harvest is plentiful” / “workers are few” / “sending you out like lambs among wolves” / “even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet”** ?
- Let’s be honest: when has something been placed before you that was **hard to swallow** (food or otherwise)? How did you handle it?
- When has **peace** rested upon your house because of the **kindness** of others?
- From the beginning of his ministry, the “brand message” for Jesus is **“the Kingdom of God is near.”** How important is it for **disciples and followers** of Jesus to continue to proclaim this message?

Sending Forth

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, close with the **Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi**: **Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. (continue...)**

(Week of October 12)

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. AMEN.

- **Stewardship Challenge for the Week:** Reflect/journal about moments in your faith journey when **God provided** what you needed for the tasks before you.

Plan to attend one of the 2026 Vision & Budget Preview Meetings

Sunday, October 19 at 10 am and Noon (Chapel)

Wednesday, October 22 at 5:30 pm
(Fellowship Hall during MidWeek Meals)

Sunday, October 26 at 10 am (Chapel)

Week of October 19 / Mercy, Not Sacrifice

Message Focus: While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, the Pharisees wonder why the teacher eats with tax collectors and sinners. Who was Jesus sent to serve and to save, and how do you avoid being too judgey?

Matthew 9:9-13 (NIV) / ⁹ As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. **"Follow me,"** he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

¹⁰ While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, **"Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"**

¹² On hearing this, Jesus said, **"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³ But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."**

Opening

- Intro: Share about a time when you experienced **mercy** or extended **mercy**.
- Pray: **Merciful Savior, you drew people toward you that others cast away, and you ate with them. Expand our tables of grace and mercy to welcome those who most need to be fed. AMEN.**

Observing

- Read **Matthew 9:9-13**. This passage represents two Gospel stories connected by a dinner. Think about Matthew's call story and subsequent gathering – what might have been the reasons for this dinner gathering? (theological speculation welcome)
- Knowing how Jesus is the **SOLUTION**, reflect on the **PROBLEMS** and **OPPORTUNITIES** within the passage for **1) Jesus' disciples, 2) religious leaders, 3) sinners**:
- **PROBLEMS** (like discipleship, dining practices, perceptions vs reality).
- **OPPORTUNITIES** (like discipleship, mercy, grace).
- Read **Hosea 6:6**. When Jesus says to learn what it means '**I desire mercy, not sacrifice,**' why is **mercy** emphasized? What is Jesus indicating within this context?
- What does it mean for **humanity** that Jesus came to heal **sinners** not the **righteous**?

Reflecting

- What does it mean for **you** that Jesus came to heal **sinners** not the **righteous**?
- It is far easier for many people to focus on **problems** instead of **opportunities**, yet how does this passage invite us to look beyond those **problems** and to the **unknown opportunities**?
- Where in your faith journey have you experienced **mercy** and/or extended **mercy**?

Sending Forth

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, close with the following Bible verses with pauses in-between:
 - **Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy** (Matthew 5:7)
 - **God, have mercy on me, a sinner** (Luke 18:13)
 - **Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved** (Ephesians 2:4-5)
 - **Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need** (Hebrews 4:16)
 - **Mercy triumphs over judgment** (James 2:13b)
 - **Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance** (Jude 1:2). **AMEN.**

- **Stewardship Challenge for the Week:** Reflect on the following about **“Mercy, not sacrifice.”** While our stewardship campaign will emphasize moving toward **sacrificial giving**, how are our collective gifts used to reflect a **merciful** God within our community?

Week of October 26 / Dogs & Crumbs

Message Focus: A Syrophoenician woman seeks healing for her child.

The woman and Jesus then engage in a conversation about bread, dogs, and crumbs.

How do Jesus’ words speak to you today about expanding the Kingdom?

Mark 7:24-30 (NIV) / ²⁴ Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. ²⁵ In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. ²⁶ The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷ **“First let the children eat all they want,”** he told her, **“for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”** ²⁸ “Lord,” she replied, “even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” ²⁹ Then he told her, **“For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.”** ³⁰ She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

[Rev Cindi chose the primary version from **Mark** over **Matthew 15:21-28**. Read for additional insights]

Opening

- Intro: Reflect on a time when your **expectations of someone** shifted and/or changed for the best.
- Pray: **Jesus, there are times when I feel like the Syrophoenician woman. I need help and surely the crumbs are enough for me too. May I believe in you and reply with such faith. AMEN.**

Observing

- Read **Mark 7:24-30**. What immediate **concerns** are revealed within the text?
- When Jesus left and went to Tyre, it seems he needed space and/or margin, yet his presence could not be kept quiet. Of Jesus’ ministry – **teaching, preaching, healing** – which, do you believe, made people want to seek him out the most?
- The Greek woman was a **foreigner**, and her begging Jesus for healing demonstrates her desperation. As you read **Jesus’ immediate response** to her, what do you perceive was his **tone**, and why do you perceive this?
- In that day, the **woman’s response** to this Teacher/ Rabbi/Healer was very **bold**. Was this the most **appropriate** response for her to make?
- Jesus sees the **woman’s faith** in what he could do, and the child was healed with his **word alone**. How does this demonstrate the depth and breadth of **Jesus’ healing ministry** for all?

Reflecting

- Do you believe that people today **seek Jesus first** or **wait for the leftovers** after everything else has been tried?
- Reflecting on **Jesus' tone** in speaking to the woman may speak to what you believe about the **"children's bread"** (Israel) as well as the **"dogs"** (Gentiles) – share what this means to you.
- Imagine a **modern version of this story** – who might Jesus be speaking about?
- How might Jesus' words speak to you today about **expanding the Kingdom**?
- Who, in your life, is seeking and/or hungering for the **crumbs**?

Sending Forth

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, close with **The Serenity Prayer**: **God, grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the Courage to change the things I can, and the Wisdom to know the difference. AMEN.**
- **Stewardship Challenge for the Week**: Your investment into the **mission & ministry** of FaithWestwood is a tremendous gift. If our task is to **make disciples of Jesus Christ** within our **mission field** (Millard, NE), what are some of your **ideas to accomplish our goals**? Please share them with the **Reimagine Team** via cindi.stewart@faithwestwood.com

Week of November 2 / In Remembrance of Me **All Saints Sunday and Holy Communion**

Message Focus: As Jesus shares a Passover meal with his disciples, he gives new meaning and purpose with words of remembrance. On this All Saints Sunday, how do you remember those who have gone before us (and the meals you shared with them)?

Luke 22:14-20 (NIV)/ ¹⁴ When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. ¹⁵ And he said to them, **"I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."** ¹⁷ After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, **"Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸ For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."** ¹⁹ And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, **"This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."** ²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, **"This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."**

Opening

- Intro: Share the **legacy** of a loved one's **recipe** which has been passed down to you. Are there any traditions and/or rituals that connect with this **favorite recipe**?

(Week of November 2)

- Pray: **Lord Jesus, you gathered with your disciples for a Passover meal and turned it into a beautiful remembrance meal in your name for generations to share until you return. For the bread and cup, we give thanks this day and always. AMEN.**

Observing

- Read **Luke 22:14-16**. While we may imagine Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* painting, turn your attention to the details: **hour came**; **reclining at the table** (look up online pictures); **Passover** (look up details); **"before I suffer"** – how do these details paint the picture in which Jesus' disciples gather in this last meal with Jesus?
- Read **verse 16** again. What is Jesus speaking to his disciples, and how does he again connect this with the **kingdom of God**?
- Read **Luke 22:17-20**. Jesus took the traditional **Passover** meal and gave it new meaning and purpose with the bread and the cup. Notice the cup was given *before* the bread here with additional words later. Is this detail significant or just part of another Gospel perspective of the details?
- Jesus' words of **"body given for you" / "new covenant in my blood"** all point to his crucifixion and death with **hope** beyond those words. What **taste** of this, do you believe, did the disciples receive?
- The original title of this message was **Fruit of the Vine**. Read **verse 18** again and discuss the connection between **fruit of the vine** and the **kingdom of God**.

Reflecting

- When did you first experience **Holy Communion**, and what do you remember about that experience?
- While many faith traditions experience **communion** in different ways, the United Methodist Church believes in communion in **symbolic** terms: the bread and wine **represent** (but do not become) the body and blood of Christ. How does this **symbolism** help you to claim Christ's presence thru communion?
- How does the United Methodist tradition of an **Open Table** for communion (all who are baptized are invited and welcome to come) help us to **extend the table to others**?
- Today we remember that **great cloud of witnesses** who have gone before us. How might we **leave a legacy** for **future generations** to **remember Jesus**?

Sending Forth

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, read and/or sing UMH #641, Fill My Cup, Lord: **Fill my cup, Lord, I lift it up, Lord. Come and quench this thirsting of my soul. Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more. Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole. AMEN.**

(Week of November 2)

- **Stewardship Challenge for the Week:** Reflect on your FaithCommitment for 2026, prayerfully considering the documents shared including Stewardship Celebration Brochure / Budget implications with *Stepping in Faith* chart / FaithCommitment sheet representing your prayers, presence, witness, service and gifts.

Week of November 9 / Save the Best **Stewardship Sunday**

Message Focus: At a wedding in Cana, the wine ran out, and then Jesus changes water into wine. In response, the Master of the banquet proclaims how “you have saved the best till now.”

On this Stewardship Sunday, prayerfully commit to God your best for 2026.

John 2:1-11 (NIV) / 2 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, “They have no more wine.”

⁴ **“Woman, why do you involve me?”** Jesus replied. **“My hour has not yet come.”** ⁵ His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to the servants, **“Fill the jars with water”** so they filled them to the brim. ⁸ Then he told them, **“Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.”** They did so, ⁹ and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew.

Then he called the bridegroom aside ¹⁰ and said, “Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.” ¹¹ What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Opening

- Intro: Briefly share some of your **favorite wedding traditions** around **meals** (including desserts).
- Pray: **Master, Savior, Jesus, as you performed a wedding miracle in Cana so long ago, you continue to teach us about abundance and saving the very best. May we share all that we are and all that we have with you and your church. AMEN.**

Observing

- Read **John 2:1-5**. Jesus attends a wedding! When the wine runs out, mother Mary involves Jesus. Why is **this detail** of **his mother** important?
- In response to his mother, Jesus says, **“My hour has not yet come.”** What are **all** the implications of this response?

(Week of November 9)

- Read **John 2:6-11**. Jesus gives detailed instructions for the jars to be filled with water – and how some should be drawn out and taken to the master of the banquet. How do **these details** indicate the value of order and hospitality within the culture?
- At the wedding, there is a **master of the banquet** whose job was to oversee the food and drinks at the feast. After tasting the “refilled” wine jars, he commends the bridegroom, “**...but you have saved the best till now.**” What does this statement mean within the **context** of the wedding feast?
- Jesus is established as “**the true light that gives light to everyone who was coming into the world**” (1:9 and chapter 1). Why is **turning water into wine** important as Jesus’ **first miracle**?

Reflecting

- Today, how do you “**save the best**” and for what purposes? (meals, desserts, events, stewardship campaigns...)
- Reflect on the context of **water** and **life** within the entire Bible. How does **John** allow these images to **point to Jesus** as the Son of Man and Son of God through this story?
- More than anything, this story points to the **first time Jesus’ glory is revealed** – how do we claim this miracle story and get a **taste** of his glory today?

Sending Forth

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, read or sing UMH #171: ♪ **Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! There’s just something about that name! Master, Savior, Jesus! Like the fragrance after the rain. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! Let all heaven and earth proclaim: Kings and kingdoms will all pass away, but there’s something about that name. AMEN.**
- **Stewardship Challenge for the Week:** Reflect on how you **shared your FaithCommitment this year** – brought forward in worship, mailed in, dropped off at church OR have yet to do so – **what are you most excited about in 2026 for FaithWestwood United Methodist Church?** While the details of your FaithCommitment are private, share your excitement for what is to come for the Church!

Write your reflections and notes in the space below:

Week of November 16 / Invitations

Veterans Video

Message Focus: When Jesus notices how guests picked places of honor at the table, he tells a parable, and then he shares who to invite! Who have you invited to your table, and who needs to be invited?

Luke 14:7-14 (NIV) / ⁷ When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: ⁸ **“When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. ⁹ If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place.**

¹⁰ **“But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. ¹¹ For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”**

¹² Then Jesus said to his host, **“When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”**

Opening

- Intro: Share about a time when you received a **special invitation** – share all the details!
- Pray: **Jesus, you invite your people to humble themselves, especially in social settings, and reach beyond one’s invite list. Inspire us to be humble and invitational today as we hear your word. AMEN.**

Observing

- Read **Luke 14:7-11**. Parable One (how guests pick places of honor at the table). At another wedding, Jesus speaks to the **guests** about choosing the lowest place to sit versus the places of honor. How is this story **contextual** within its day, and how is it more **universal** for all generations?
- Jesus says, **“For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”** How does **this passage** as well as the Gospels reveal **humility** as a virtue to be desired?
- Read **Luke 14:12-14**. Parable Two (how host picks those who are invited). How is this story **contextual** within its day, and how is it more **universal** for all generations?
- Jesus indicates the implications of inviting those beyond your invite list including being **blessed** and being **repaid** at the **“resurrection of the righteous.”** Were these **kingdom implications** enough to change the behavior of those with whom Jesus was speaking?

Reflecting

- Parable One: What do you believe is a greater motivator for **behavior** – **humiliation or honor**?
- Have you ever been **humbled** in a surprising and/or humiliating way?
- Parable Two: What tends to be **motivating factors** for you when **extending invitations**?
- What are the potential benefits of **extending the invitation** to those **who cannot ever repay you**? Who might be on this **list**?
- What **else** does this passage speak to you about **acceptance, inclusion, kingdom**?

Sending Forth

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, close with the **Lord's Prayer: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. AMEN.**
- **Stewardship Challenge for the Week:** Moving beyond our **Stewardship Campaign** and into the **holiday season**, how can you be the best steward of all that has been given to you? For what are you most **grateful & thankful**?

Week of November 23 / Taste of My Banquet

Message Focus: As someone proclaims, "Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God," Jesus tells a parable of the Great Banquet and those who gave excuses to not attend. Who gets a taste of his banquet?

Luke 14:15-24 (NIV) / ¹⁵When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God." ¹⁶Jesus replied: "**A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. ¹⁷At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' ¹⁸But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' ¹⁹Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' ²⁰Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'**

²¹"The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'

²²"**"Sir," the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'** ²³Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. ²⁴I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"

Opening

- Intro: Share a time when you used an **excuse** to get out of an invitation – any regrets?
- Pray: **Gracious LORD, you invite us to the Great Banquet. Truly we want a taste of your banquet, so free us from those distractions and empty excuses we might dare to speak. Prepare our hearts for the Kingdom that awaits us! AMEN.**

Observing

- As **verse 15** sets the stage for the parable of the Great Banquet to be told by Jesus, read **verse 15** three times, pausing a few moments between each reading.
- Read **Luke 14:15-20**. The first part of this passage is about the **banquet**, the many **guests** invited, and all the **excuses** offered. Are these legitimate **excuses**?
- Read **Luke 14:21**. In the master's anger, the servant is sent to the streets and alleys (within the town) to bring in the **least of these**. Does this list **exclude** anyone from that day?
- Read **Luke 14:22-24**. When the servant reports that there is "**still room**," the master send the servant out to roads and country lanes (beyond the town) so that the house would be "**full**." As the Gospels were shared, what message was emphatically **heard** through this parable?
- As **verse 24** completes the parable of the Great Banquet told by Jesus, read **verse 24** three times, pausing a few moments between each reading. Were the implications of **this verse** fulfilled and **justified** through the telling of the parable?

Reflecting

- Which of the excuses listed in **Luke 14:15-20** might resemble some of the **excuses** you have shared to reject an invitation?
- Throughout the Gospels, Jesus speaks of the **least of these** including **the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame**. Who are the **least of these** today which would be included in this list? And who might be included representing **the roads and country lanes**?
- Does **verse 24** compel you to **accept the invitation** and to **taste the banquet** before you through a life with God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit?

Sending Forth

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, read and/or sing #2267 in the Faith We Sing: **Taste and see, taste and see, the goodness of the Lord. Oh, taste and see, the goodness of the Lord, of the Lord. AMEN.**
- **Stewardship Challenge for the Week**: How has **Come to the Table** inspired how you will engage with your **priorities** and even your **holiday gatherings** for Thanksgiving, Advent season, and Christmas this year?

Mission Offerings & Activities

10/05 - World Communion Sunday. This is an international observance by Christians of many traditions celebrating The Lord's Supper - a powerful symbol of our unity. **Activity:** October's Giving Tree Project is collecting individually wrapped candy to be distributed at Trunk or Treat and used to fill treat bags for CMS students.

10/12 - Outside the Walls. Today's mission offering will help our Missions Committee begin to cover the costs of materials and supplies for next year's Outside the Walls weekend. Our Blanketed with Prayer team will add crocheted hats and scarves to 50 "Winter Blessing Bags" for unhoused community members. **Activity:** Scrap or new yarn donations may be added to tubs in the west vestibule.

10/19 - Iglesia Comunitaria. Our sister United Methodist congregation in South Omaha, is finally able to hire a part-time office assistant. Today's mission offering will go toward the purchase of office supplies and equipment for this position. At Christmas, our Blanketed with Prayer team provides a handmade hat and scarf to each child and student at Iglesia. **Activity:** Scrap and new yarn donations may be added to tubs in the west vestibule.

10/26 - CMS Partnership. Today's mission offering will provide an evening meal for 90 Central Middle School teachers during parent-teacher conferences. Funds will also supplement our **in-kind donations** of items to stock "The Zone" - a no-cost CMS resource providing students with basic needs like clothing and personal care items.

11/02 - FaithWorks Pantry. Today's mission offering will enable us to purchase items in bulk to stock the pantry shelves. **Activity:** Also, remember to bring at least four (or more) items from the green "Four or More" list each month -- to help meet the increasing needs of those facing food insecurity in our community.

11/09 - Thanksgiving Bag Giveaway. Mission offerings for the next three weeks will help the FaithWorks pantry team supplement the congregation's in-kind donations to meet the pantry's goal of filling 250 Thanksgiving meal bags for giveaway on November 22. **Activity:** Continue to add new items to stock the "CMS Zone" to the tubs outside the church office and on the CMS table in the foyer.

11/16 - Thanksgiving Bag Giveaway. Today's mission offering will be used to purchase additional supplies to meet the pantry's goal of filling 250 Thanksgiving meal bags. **Activity:** Continue adding new and gently used household items for The Furniture Project to the collection tubs in the foyer and inside the west entrance, under the coat rack.

11/23 - Thanksgiving Bag Giveaway. Give generously to today's mission offering to help our pantry team cover the remaining expenses for supplies to fill all 250 Thanksgiving meal bags. **Activity:** Our Blanketed with Prayer ministry team is making crocheted hats and scarves to be included with a FaithWestwood Christmas gift for each Mosaic client. Scrap or new yarn donations may be added to tubs in the west vestibule.

