FGBC: Hospitality & Justice: The Kingdom Meal
Luke 22:14-30
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Dan Hoffman

Over the last 9 weeks we've been in the gospel of Luke looking at a topic that runs through the whole Bible but comes to its climax in the life of Jesus. And that is the call of God's people to care about the things that God cares about. If you don't care about what God cares about that should scare you. If as you look at your life and the things you are passionate about are all about you, that should scare you. And on the flip side we should be asking ourselves "I wonder what God thinks about what I'm doing? Is He excited about the stuff I'm excited about, or is one of us missing out on something?"
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We started this series at the beginning of Jesus' ministry where He got up to read from the Prophet Isaiah in His home town. And He told people: "My ministry is going to be about justice. God has anointed Me to proclaim good news to the poor." And everyone got excited about this. But then He added, "Actually this news isn't primarily for you, it's for the poor and the blind and the oppressed that you guys have turned a blind eye to. God's blessing is going to come through Me to them. This was the sermon Jesus preached to define His ministry!

And Jesus' neighbours and friends didn't appreciate it. They figured they were tuned into what God was about, and the accusation that they weren't filled them with rage. And so at the potluck after Jesus' first sermon they tried to throw Him off a cliff.

That was 2000 years ago, but here's this weird thing that happens when church-attenders like us read stories like these. Our gut level response is "Well, I've never tried to throw Jesus off a cliff so I'm good." But Jesus' point was that good religious people always end up turning a blind eye to the things God actually cares about. And so intellectually we need a constant reminder of what Jesus was about – we are simply forgetful. But even beyond that we need a constant spiritual transfusion; we need Jesus' Spirit, the Holy Spirit, to be constantly filling us if we are ever going to successfully image Him in the world He has placed us in. On our own we can't do this.
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So today we are doing two things, we are drawing this series to a close with a final story that takes place at a meal with Jesus – we've done lots of that. And second, we are gearing up for the highlight of the Christian calendar which is Easter – next week.
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Alright, open your Bible to Luke 22. And as you turn there let me set the context for you: it's Holy Week, which refers to the week leading up to Jesus' crucifixion. This is the most important period of time in Christian history. Jesus lived 33 years on earth, but over a quarter of the chapters in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John deal with this last week. So this is the emphasis.
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In Luke 22 it's already Thursday. Four days earlier it was Palm Sunday and Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey to great excitement. People were waving branches and shouting 'Hosanna' which is a Hebrew word that combines two ideas.

On one side it is a simple exclamation like 'Awesome!' But on the other it's an appeal for salvation: "save us, we can't save ourselves!" And so as the people are throwing their jackets in the mud in front of Jesus's very short, four-legged limo there is a whole lot of positive emotion in the air. Everyone thinks Jesus is the saviour they've been looking for. I mean anyone who can walk on water and raise the dead could make quick work of the pesky Romans. And so all the people figure they are on the same page as Jesus. Isn't that what we do? We think God cares about what we care about.

But then Monday arrives, and Jesus shows up at the temple to teach but merchants are selling sacrifices to poor people there. And this ticks Jesus off. The powerful are abusing the poor in God's name.

Now if you know Jesus you know He never loses His cool or flies into a rage. But this doesn't mean He's a softy. So He calculates and goes and makes a whip out of cords before returning to the temple to drive out the money changers.

And the penny drops – Jesus isn't like us. He's weird. He cares about stuff we don't care about. That's Monday.

On Tuesday, the Pharisees who are the pastors, the religious leaders, the holiest people in Israel, set a trap to arrest Jesus, but He walks around it. It's kind of like what happened at the cliff. Jesus isn't interested in being murdered. But not in the same way you and I aren't interested in being murdered. He knows His death is God's plan and He's on board. But He is so totally in control that He doesn't allow anyone to take His life from Him. He's going to die on His terms when He is good and ready.

But He doesn't just let the Pharisees get away with this, instead, He lays down the harshest words He ever directed at anyone:

> Blind guides!... you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity. Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness…. Snakes! Sons of vipers! How will you escape the judgment of hell? (Matthew 23:24-33)

Imagine if someone showed up at your Bible study and called the leader out like that? Jesus wasn't nice. He was on a mission to shine God's justice and mercy into humanity and ironically it was church-going religious people who stood in the way. Tuesday.
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On Wednesday Jesus and His disciples lay low. And then Thursday arrived and Jesus sent His disciples to find a room to prepare for His Last Supper. It's here that Judas finally realizes the Master he has been following isn't who he thought He was. And so he sells information to the Pharisees about where Jesus will be later that night. "He's going to be up on the Mount of Olives after dinner. Nobody will be watching. It would be the perfect time to jump Him."
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Now Jesus knows all this is going on. Jesus knows He is going to be captured and beaten. He knows His best friend Peter is going to deny he even knows Him. He knows He is going to be stripped naked and humiliated. All that is going to happen later tonight and tomorrow. But this is Jesus' plan. And so He chooses to spend His last hours with His disciples eating. Let's pick it up in Luke 22 starting in verse 14:

[Read Luke 22:14-15]

Stop there for a second. The Last Supper is a Passover meal. Now if you've ever watched those old movies this is where God asks Charlton Heston to head on over the Egypt and tell that guy "Let My people go."

And Pharaoh and Moses don't see eye to eye on this right away so some plagues come and beat the living daylights out of Egypt.

If you ever wondered what that's all about it is a cosmic war. If you were an Egyptian running around 4000 years ago and somebody turned the Nile to blood and there were frogs jumping all over the place you would know that your god of fertility, Heqet. just got a licken' laid on her. And if all your cattle dropped dead than Hathor the goddess of protection would be getting hers. It's a battle.

And of course the 10th plague was the death of every firstborn in Egypt from the least all the way up to Pharaoh's house. And Pharaoh was the greatest god in Egypt. He was Ra the sun god manifest in the flesh ruling his people. And so the plagues are YHWH doing battle and proving His utter domination over the Egyptian system and there was all sorts of collateral damage.

But God provided a way to avoid it. If anyone at all wanted to ensure the safety of their firstborn all they had to do was sacrifice a lamb and spread its blood on their doorposts. But not just any lamb, it had to be a perfect lamb, an expensive lamb. And not only that but the lamb had to live with them in their house as a pet – it was a loved lamb. If you've got kids you can imagine what slaughter time would be like. Everyone is going to feel this. There are going to be tears and hurt feelings. And little voices are going to ask "Why are we doing this?"

And the answer was "God has made a way to save His people. We deserve death but He has allowed us to trade our lives for the life of this lamb."

Now you can rage vegan all over this if you like, but the Jews rejoiced. They got it. And that's because they weren't slaves anymore, God had bought their freedom. And so Passover became the biggest celebration of the year. This was the salvation meal.

And Jesus continued. Look at verse 15

[Read Luke 22:15-16]

Jesus was excited to eat this meal – He had been looking forward to this – because this meal was the transition or the tipping point towards everything Jesus had lived for. He "would not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

Now the Kingdom of God is one of the mysteries of the Bible. It's one of the concepts like the Trinity that you can't nail down with a simple sentence. But just because it's complicated doesn't mean it isn't important. You aren't a Christian if you write the Trinity off, and the Kingdom isn't optional either.

So the Kingdom for Jesus was absolutely tied to the gospel which you know, if you've been around church, is about salvation. But people make a mistake here. You see, the gospel for Jesus wasn't about believing some stuff so you could get to heaven when you died. It was about realigning your life to start living with God now.

So at the beginning of Mark, in the parallel passage to the one where Jesus told His neighbours "I've come to preach good news to the poor." We read:

> Jesus went into Galilee, where He preached God's Good News. "The time promised by God has come at last!" He announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!" (Mark 1:14-15)

The gospel for Jesus was that in Him God's kingdom was breaking into the world and taking ground. And getting saved then means repenting, exchanging the way you were living to line your life up with Jesus' reality. Saved people start joining God in injecting His antidote into the sin-sick and hell-bent world we live in.

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Now re-enter the Last Supper. Jesus is standing at the threshold. He's about to win the title "God's Passover lamb." You see the cross wasn't Jesus' moment of defeat, it was His victory. The cross was His glory. This is where God outsmarts Satan by offering him the opportunity to strike His heal while He crushes his head. And at the same time the cross is about giving God the justice He demands.

Sin isn't something a holy God can sweep under the rug. Sin has to be atoned for. In order for God to be fair the wicked treason each one of us has embraced as we've rebelliously opposed God's way has to be paid for. And the penalty is death. Not just physical death, but eternal death.

And so either we will pay this ourselves, or somehow a sacrifice will be given on our behalf. But only a perfect sacrifice would work. It would have to be infinitely valuable and a perfect substitute. And when you do the math you realize there aren't a lot of options. In fact, unless God does this there is no other way.

And so God did. God became the lamb to die in our place. His blood on the door post allowed the angel of death to pass over. And the good news is that now we can live our lives in light of this reality; no longer slaves.
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But we are so forgetful aren't we? Don't you find yourself still drawn into things you hate and neglecting what you wish you loved? Friends, in Jesus you've been justified – you've been made right with God – but you are still being transformed. The process of looking like Jesus isn't finished yet. Right?

And so Jesus instituted The Last Supper to remind us of what He has done. But I want to push the envelope here a little. It's more than just a remembrance. We need to eat this meal again and again. We need to stand at the foot of the cross and nourish our souls. Jesus said:

> I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you cannot have eternal life within you…. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. Anyone who eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in Him. (John 6:53-56)

Jesus isn't a cannibal; He's talking about Passover and the means God has made for us to be saved and to continue to be saved. The cry of God's people has always been 'Hosanna' – Save us, we can't do this ourselves.
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Aren't you glad Jesus has made provision for the frailty of His children? Look at verse 20.

[Read Luke 22:20-24]

What?! This is Peter, James and John throwing punches at each other below the belt. This is the closest friends of Jesus opposing everything Jesus is about. This is satanic.

These guys don't need to remember Jesus – He's standing right there. They've still got crumbs of communion stuck in their beards! They need something more than a reminder and so do you. They need a transfusion. Unless Jesus gets into them, and gets in again, they aren't going to be the light of the world He called them to become. And so look how Jesus responds to their satanic squabble in verse 25.

[Read Luke 22:25-30]

Jesus says “I’m greater than all you guys, but look at Me; I’m serving you. I’m down on My knees washing your feet. I’m up on the cross taking your place. This is what My Kingdom is about. My Kingdom grows when My people care about the things God cares about and do the things I do.

I’m not here looking out for My best interest. I’m here with good news for the poor. I’m here to serve justice to the oppressed and freedom to the captives, and this is the Kingdom I’m inviting you into. God’s kingdom is about actually flipping this sin-broken world right side up – actually making a difference here. And you guys are the ambassadors.
…
So the remembering we do here isn’t just intellectual. Every time we come to Jesus’ meal we posture ourselves before the cross and say “Hosanna! The infection of sin is rampant here, and we need Your Spirit to fill us and free us from focusing on ourselves.”
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And the good news is that Jesus is in the transformation business. He offers transformation to us, and He offers transformation to the world through us. This is why Jesus promised us:

> You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be My witnesses, telling people about Me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

We’re living that! 2000 years ago God’s kingdom started breaking in. Jesus started taking back the ground sin had corrupted, and we are the evidence that He’s winning.

But we’ve been transformed for a purpose. “Christian” means “little Christ.” That is the reality He has bestowed upon us and the kingdom He’s invited us into. He says to us “You are the light of the world that I have placed in Prince George. So don’t sit on your salvation, fill the city with it. Search out the poor, expose injustice, free the captive and the oppressed and carry on the increase of My kingdom. Don’t just remember some right stuff about Me, let Me get into you so you can live Me out.”
…
Friends, the non-negotiable call for us as individuals and as a church is that we stop focusing on ourselves and who is the greatest and what we want. The call is for us to follow Jesus to the cross and serve the world. And it’s going to hurt. It’s going to cost. But the promise is that if we will do this we will find ourselves partnering with God.

And it’s going to be awesome. Prince George won’t be the same if a bunch of Holy Spirit filled women and men run into this city looking for need and serving like Jesus. So if you want in on that then cry out “Hosanna, save us. We cannot save ourselves.” And prepare yourself to give away everything you’ve received.