

“Setting The Table”

Text: Luke 14:12-24

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(This is a participatory message with children seated around a wooden table in the front of the church. Adults are encouraged to respond from where they are seated.)

Company is coming for dinner! Whenever that happens at our house, a certain special kind of excitement ripples throughout.

If you could have dinner with anyone, real or fictional, who would you choose as your company? (Have a moment of quiet and then ask for a show of hands for each category: Famous people, friends, people that you don't know well, family)

Why did so many of you choose “family”? (Love, etc.)

Why are Family Dinners important? (Special foods, stories, memories)

Our Church has family meals too! (Ask for a show of hands for each category: potluck, pizza night, picnic)

Our Church has a very special family meal that members share together on the **first Sunday of the month**. **What do we call this special meal?** (Communion). It's a meal we can share to **remind ourselves that we are all part of God's family**. Another name for it is “The Lord's Supper,” and it helps to **remind us of the Last Supper that Jesus shared with his disciples**.

“**Communion**” comes from the word “commune.” To commune with someone means to have a close, intimate conversation: a sharing of thoughts and feelings. The word **community** also comes from the word commune. So then, at Communion, we experience a close, special relationship with God and with each other as followers of Jesus.

All of us know persons who go to other Christian churches. They also are followers of Jesus but sometimes the word “**Eucharist**” is used to describe the meal. The word “Eucharist” means “Thanksgiving.” It reminds us that this is a time of great thanksgiving for Jesus – his life and death and resurrection.

Some Christians, especially Roman Catholics, call this special meal “**The Mass**.” That name comes from Latin words “Ite, missa est” which means “Go, you have been sent.” This reminds us that Jesus Christ is with us in this special meal which nourishes us and strengthens us to go out into the world to love and serve others as Jesus did.

So whether we say “Communion, Eucharist, or Mass, when we come to the Table and take the symbolic bread and juice, we feel close to God and Jesus and one another; we show our thanks to God; and, we eat this meal to be strengthened so we can go out to love and serve others.

It's now time to get ready for Communion.

For our special meal, Communion, we can use this table. Things don't seem quite right! When company is coming for dinner, things have to be prepared. **What do you have to do to get ready?** (Clean the house, shop for food, then get the food ready, set the table, and take care of whatever special details are necessary.)

Something similar happens here at church as we get ready for this special meal that we are celebrating together. The custodian had cleaned, someone had baked the bread or gone to the store and bought a special loaf especially for Communion, and two members (our deacons) had come early to get ready.

But there is still more to do. **Now we are going to set the table.** (A child enters from the rear and processes up the aisle with the white linen table cloth. Several children have followed behind and help to put the cloth over the communion table.) **Next we need to add the dishes that we use for Communion.** These dishes have special names. The plate is called a **paten** and the cup is called a **chalice**. (The deacons process from the back and place them on the Communion table.)

Now we need to add the food. What are the special foods that we eat at our Communion meal? Why do we eat those foods? Remember that the bread and grape juice were readily available where Jesus lived. Last year our friend, Daranee, from Thailand shared with us that in Thailand the Communion food is sticky rice and coconut water. (The children/families process with their plates of special breads). What a variety of breads we have this morning! Today we have many different breads representing the world.

Our invitation for this special meal is from Jesus. This invitation is not just for us, but for all persons who are followers of Jesus. All are welcome to come to this special meal.

Before we share in this special meal, we are going to stand and sing about how this special meal set on this table is a Welcome Table for all. Remember today is World Communion Sunday.

Because today is World Communion Sunday, followers of Jesus worldwide are celebrating this special meal today. Followers of Jesus are of many different races, colors, customs, languages and nations. Some Christian churches, such as Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Anglican celebrate Communion every Sunday; some churches, like ours, celebrate Communion once a month; and, some churches celebrate Communion only four times a year. Whatever our varied traditions, we know that on this one Sunday every year, Christians throughout the world sit down to this table together. Throughout the 24 hours of this one day, millions of members of the universal Christian church are at this table to do as Christ invited, "Do this in remembrance of me."

Now the table is set, the meal is prepared and ready. Let's not forget that as we gather in the company of fond family and friends, you also are welcomed at this table "whoever you are, wherever you are on your faith journey."