

## Sermon 3 Meals of Reconciliation

### Intro/

I wonder if you've ever felt so drained of emotions – or so low and despondent that you just don't know what to do? Perhaps you've wandered about looking at what needs doing but just can't face it perhaps? Or perhaps there's so much to do that you just can't seem to prioritise and get stuck in?

Well, if you have, then you can certainly identify with a bit of what the disciples were feeling in our reading.

It's been about a week since the death and resurrection of Jesus. And during that week the disciples have had a whole gamut of differing emotions.

It's been a 'roller-coaster' time for them – they've seen Jesus arrested, tried and convicted, tortured, killed and buried – and the tomb sealed and guarded.

Then they find the tomb open – and empty – and Angels saying that Jesus is alive! And the women and some others have seen Him! And then they've seen Jesus themselves – when He comes and stands with them inside a locked room, where He speaks with them and eats with them.

And they didn't know quite what to make of it all because it's all so confusing.

Over the week, their emotions have ranged from enjoying a nice Passover Meal to – shock and horror, fear and grief, confusion and anxiety – then to relief and joy – and hope – and elation – and then back again to confusion and insecurity – and there's an element of restlessness too I think – and so it's at the end of this traumatic and eventful week that we pick up the story of what happened next.

So, the disciples are restless and they can't settle to anything – and Simon Peter needs to be doing something familiar and so he says that he's going fishing.

And you know what happened next, don't you? They worked hard all night – but caught absolutely nothing –

And so, they were tired and dispirited – they knew that Jesus had risen from the dead, but they didn't know what this could mean or how it would affect them.

Now, unknown to them, Jesus has turned up on the beach, and He calls out to them to put their nets down on the other side of the boat – and as they do what they think to be a stranger says, they catch so many fish that they can't haul them into the boat and they have to drag the nets along behind them.

I wonder if they remembered when something like this had happened once before? When Jesus had been in the boat with them and they'd caught so much fish then that they couldn't haul it in.

Well John remembered, didn't he? He suddenly realises who it is that's on the beach – and he says to Peter, 'It's the Lord.'

And after they'd dragged the fish ashore Jesus invites them to join Him for breakfast. 'Come and have breakfast,' He says, 'Come and have breakfast.'

But this wasn't an ordinary breakfast – it was, in fact, a meal of reconciliation.

You see at the time of Jesus, when someone had been hurt by others, and wronged by others, it was the custom to call and host a meal – a meal of reconciliation and forgiveness – and to invite those who had wronged you – to eat at your table.

And so, this morning we're going to spend some time looking at 3 meals of reconciliation which Jesus hosts.

The first one we'll look at is the Last Supper – that Passover Meal that Jesus hosted before He was betrayed.

Next, we'll look at the Breakfast on the Beach

And then lastly, we'll look at what Jesus says to the church of Laodicea in the book of Revelation.

1/

What do you see when you think of the Last Supper? Do you think of that famous painting of the long table with Jesus in the middle and the disciples on either side? If you do – then I have to tell you that it wasn't like that – the table was actually a 3 - sided table called a 'triclinium'.

There weren't any chairs either – the custom was to recline at the table – that is to rest on ones left elbow and to eat with the right hand – with the feet and the rest of the body going away from the table.

The wing of the table to the left was the most important part and this is where the host would recline with the positions of honour being on his left side and his right side.

The position on the left side of the host was for the chief guest of honour!

Now – it's Jesus who's the host at the Last Supper, isn't it? He's made all the arrangements and so He was reclining in the position of the host –

The accounts of the Last Supper in the Bible tell us that John was leaning on Jesus' chest and so John must have been reclining to the right of Jesus –

But who is it that is reclining as the chief guest of honour – to the left of Jesus?

Well, it must have been Judas! And there's 2 indications of this: the first one is that it was the custom for the host to dip a piece of bread in the meat juices and give it to the chief guest of honour – and Jesus actually did this for Judas didn't He? in fact Jesus couldn't have reached anyone else with His right hand. And the other is that Judas had to be reclining next to Jesus in order to have dipped his hand into the same bowl as Jesus.

Now we really need to get this – Jesus had chosen Judas as His chief guest of honour – and when He gave Judas the bread dipped in the sauce – He was offering Judas His forgiveness and His peace!

It's as if Jesus says to Judas, 'Look, I value you – I know what you're planning to do but I forgive you – and I offer you my forgiveness – this is a meal of reconciliation.'

But Judas couldn't take it could he? and after he'd gone and betrayed Jesus he went and hanged himself, didn't he?

Jesus had called and hosted that Last Supper and made it not only the Passover Meal but also a meal of reconciliation and forgiveness – for all of those who would later let Him down and deny Him.

2/

The next meal of reconciliation that we'll look at is the one from our reading of the Breakfast on the Beach where Jesus invites His disciples to come and have breakfast with Him – you see Jesus has come prepared to host this breakfast – this meal of reconciliation – and He's brought fish and already got it cooking – He's brought bread with Him and He's brought the charcoal for the fire with Him and when He invites them to come and have breakfast with Him – He's in effect saying to them that He knows that they have all let Him down – that have denied Him – that

they have wronged Him – but that He forgives them – and He offers them the fish and the bread that He's prepared for them.

And as they eat with Jesus, they receive His forgiveness all over again – and Simon Peter goes on to receive his recommissioning from Jesus as Jesus counters Peter's 3 denials with 3 commands to look after the followers of Jesus.

Jesus knew that Peter needed that added assurance that he'd been forgiven for the 3 times that he's denied Jesus.

And as Jesus re-instates Peter's mission 3 times – Peter would have known deep down what Jesus was really doing – that Jesus was forgiving him everything

Jesus was recalling him – restoring him – reinstating him and giving him a new start.

Yes. Peter had messed up – but Jesus still wanted him – Jesus still had a purpose for Peter's life – He still had a job for him to do.

You see, Jesus saw Peter as the person he was meant to be – He saw Peter as that great Church Leader.

And He sees each one of us as the people we are meant to be – There's that scripture, isn't there that says something along the lines of 'stop looking at the past, look at the new thing that God is doing – in effect, start looking at the people we are meant to be – and stop looking at where we are now and the people we are now.

In effect, when Jesus was talking to Peter, He was inviting him to move on from this place of denial and to move on to a new place – and for Peter this 'new place' was the person he was meant to be – and the person Peter was meant to be was a feeder of Jesus' lambs, a carer of Jesus' sheep and a feeder of Jesus' sheep.

Yes, Jesus sees where he's at now, but Jesus also sees the person Peter is meant to be.

And it's the same for each one of us – none of us is meant to stay in this place wherever 'this place' is for us.

Your place may be a place of regret—or a place of disillusionment – or a place of unhappiness – or a place of despair – or a place of mediocrity, just plodding on – but this is not Jesus' plan for us and it never was.

Jesus still has a plan and a purpose for each one of us and for our lives because He sees us as the people we are meant to be.

And I think the challenge for us. Is to stand up – look tall – be confident – and to say to Jesus that we've had enough of being where we are now – we want to move out of this place, whatever that place is – and we want to be the people He has called us to be in the first place.

Wouldn't that be amazing? The church would be amazing – I know it's pretty good now but think what it could be like if we were all the people that God had created us for in the first place – God sees us as His Masterpiece –

3/

And the third meal of reconciliation that we'll look at is the one that takes place in our hearts.

In the Book of Revelation, Jesus says, 'Here I AM! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.'

In St Paul's Cathedral there's a painting by Holman Hunt called Jesus Light of the World and he shows Jesus standing outside a

door that's overgrown with weeds and thistles and brambles and Jesus is knocking on the door.

There isn't a handle on the outside of the door and so the only way Jesus can get in, is if someone opens the door from the inside. It's generally thought that the door represents the human heart and that the only way Jesus can enter our lives is if we let Him, if we open the door of our hearts and lives and let Him in.

That's all very true, but I want us to focus on the last few words of that text. Jesus says, 'if anyone hears my voice and opens the door – I will come in and eat with him and he with me.'

Jesus puts a whole new slant on this text with the words, 'and he with me.' This makes it a meal of reconciliation – with Jesus now the host and not just the guest!

He began by being the guest but somewhere along the line the relationship changes and He becomes the host – hosting a meal of reconciliation and forgiveness to anyone who will let Him in – and that's us! And everyone out there too!

Jesus offers forgiveness and peace deep down inside us, for all the times we have wronged Him and continue to wrong Him – for all the things we've ever done wrong and continue to do wrong –

Eating with Jesus means it's OK – we're OK – everything is OK –

Jesus still wants us – Jesus still has a plan for us – Jesus can still use us in His Kingdom –

Jesus offers us reconciliation – that same reconciliation that He offered to Judas and Peter!

End/

So that's three of the meals which Jesus hosted as meals of reconciliation – Jesus loved His food, didn't He? And He uses meal times as a gentle way of coming alongside people who have misused His friendship and hurt Him and denied Him and betrayed Him.

His forgiveness and love, is for everyone who will eat with Him as a way of receiving that forgiveness.

Whatever we've done or not done, Jesus still wants us and He can still use us and He still loves us. He still has that amazing plan for our lives as He wants us to be the people we are meant to be.