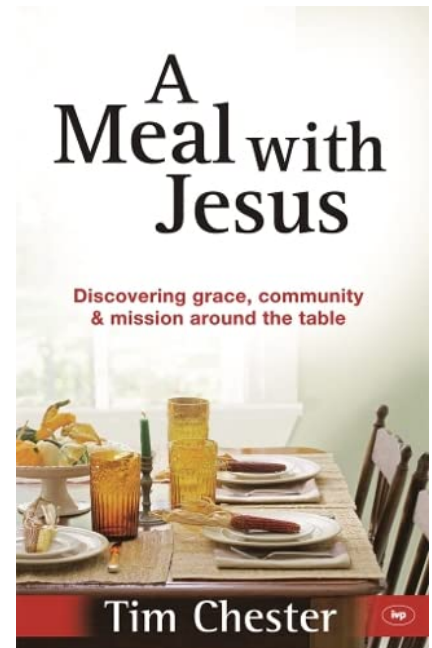


Christ Church W4 Study Notes

2023: Eating With Jesus:

“In Luke’s gospel it was the way Jesus ate with people that got him killed”

Tim Chester *A Meal With Jesus*



Week One:

08 Jan: Eating with Jesus at Matthew's House

Starter Question:

If Jesus came to visit you for a meal what would you want to serve him?

Read Luke 5.27-31 (see also Mark 2:13-17 / Matthew 9: 9-13)

Context: What story comes before this one? What was that man’s need and what does he end up doing (v.25)

What is similar in about how Jesus calls Levi (aka Matthew) in v. 27-28?

A tax collector was a high ranking job and well paid, but it also meant you were collaborating with the enemy occupying force, Rome.

What would Levi a) give up and b) gain in choosing to follow this miracle working Rabbi?

Bearing in mind the what the Old Testament Levi was chosen to do (see Number 3-4) what do you think his parents had hoped for when they called him ‘Levi’?

When we go off the boil spiritually:

There are two responses in this passage to going off the boil:

Levi is not living up to him priestly namesake! He’s been using his talents to further his own life/career, a bit like Zacchaeus in Luke 19. He’s focused in on himself.

The critics are like their colleagues in Luke 18:9-14. They thank God that they are not like the tax collector, and take pride in all that they give and do for God. They’re focused in on how they are better than others.

What do the critics say to Jesus’ disciples?

Why do you think it is Jesus who replies and not them?

Do you see God as a doctor you need a daily check up with, or is it easier to see him a policeman/judge you or others should keep on the right side of (but maybe from a distance?) Do you have other images of God you prefer?

Takeaway meal:

When you go off the boil spiritually are you more likely to focus on providing for yourself and those around you, or becoming critical of those around you and comparing yourself ‘at least I’m not as bad as...’? If Jesus could whisper one thing to you to help with this when he visits you what do you think that would be?

Week Two:

15 Jan: Eating with Jesus in the Grainfields

Starter Question:

Can you remember a time when you were really hungry and ate the first thing that you came across? What was it like to finally eat something?

Read: Luke 6:1-5 (see also Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28)

In the parallel version of this story in Matthew's gospel Jesus has just told his disciples too:

"Come to me all that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest... for I am gentle and lowly... my yoke is easy and my burden is light"

At about that time they find themselves in fields on a Sabbath day and they are hungry (Mt 12:1-2).

What do we learn about their day to day lives with this nomadic preacher from this anecdote?

Does having Jesus' rest and 'light burden' [Mt 11:29-30] mean that you avoid tiredness and hunger?

Context: In Luke 5-6 Jesus is beginning to make enemies with the religious critics (Pharisees). He's eaten with tax collectors and told them that his new wine (new Kingdom) cannot fit into their old system (old wineskins). The critics have complained that his disciples are always eating and drinking (Luke 5:33), but like most criticisms the word 'always' is misplaced. Now they're hungry, but the old system says that they cannot do any work on the Sabbath. The critics have made Sabbath (the day of rest) into a day of burden by adding rules onto rules to make it very hard to keep.

What do the disciples do when they are hungry? (Luke 6:1)

What reaction do they get?

Do you have any sympathy with the Pharisees? What might a modern day version of this law keeping be from home life / workplace? What are the benefits of conforming to rules?

Jesus response:

What does Jesus base his reply on?

How does the story from 1 Samuel 21:1-6 undercut the Pharisees argument?

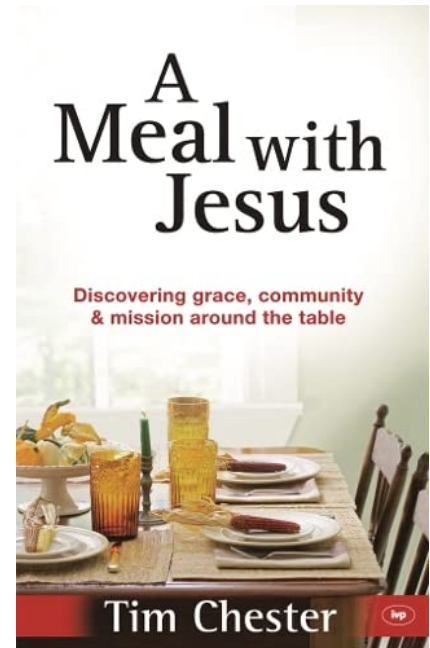
Look at Luke 6: 5 and 6: 9-11 together. What is the impact of Jesus challenging/breaking these food and work laws?

And finally,

Why do you think he did not compromise over something as small as letting his disciples eat the husks of grain? Why could he not attempt a 'win-win' solution with the Pharisees? How does this controversial Jesus fit with being 'gentle and lowly'? What else was at stake here?

Takeaway meal:

Ask the 'gentle and lowly' Jesus to show you how to come to him, take his yoke upon you and bear the burden he gives you.



Week Three:

29 Jan: Eating with Jesus at Mary and Martha's House

Starter Question:

What are the things that might put you off having people to eat/visit with you where you live?

Read Luke 10:38-42 (see also John 11:1; 12:2-3)

This is the story of Mary and Martha, sisters of Lazarus and people that Jesus loved dearly as personal friends (see John 11:5;35).

What do you imagine a village home in the 1 Century might look like?
Furnishings? Crockery? Smells? Surroundings? Size?

What would make it homely?

In the story the two main characters have different ideas about how to make Jesus at home, honour him and enjoy him being there. What are their two approaches?

Who does the welcoming?

Who listens?

Who does the work?

Who gets angry?

What is Jesus' response?

Imagine:

Read the story again out loud, three times though. Pause between each reading for a few seconds. As you listen to the words what do you feel? Can you see yourself in the story? Are you watching from the sides. Are you one of the main characters?

After the third reading through pause again. Ask Jesus to show you what he wants you to learn from this meal with Jesus.

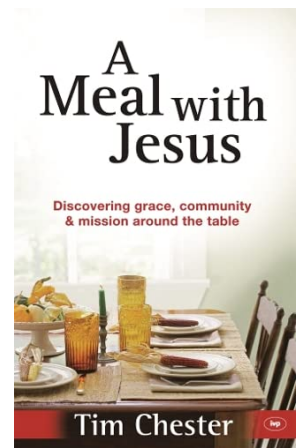
Take some time to let him change you.

Takeaway meal

Who do you feel most comfortable visiting you in your home/space? Why?

Could this story of eating with Jesus change how you feel about welcoming others into the spaces you are comfortable in (home/cafe/church even)?

Pray as a group about how you can offer hospitality and attention to those around you.



Week Four:

05 Feb: Eating with Jesus at the Pharisee's house

Starter Question:

Can you remember getting a bad report at school / work review. Did you think it was justified? How did you respond?

Read Luke 11:37-54 (health warning: Jesus may shock you)

Who has invited Jesus for a meal? Who are the other guests at table?
How does the story end (v.54)?

Context:

Flick back through the pages of Luke's gospel noting some of the other 'eating with Jesus' stories we have covered.

What do you notice about Jesus' relationships with people around him?
On a scale of 1-10 how much does he like to please?
How does he react to those who think that they are important?

In Luke 11:33-36 he talks about the people of God being like a light that shines in dark places.
What sort of place do you think the Pharisee thought his home was - a dark or light place?

Eating with Jesus

There is an anecdote about Queen Victoria that she drank from the 'finger dipping bowl' on her table when a guest mistakenly did the same to make him feel at ease. How does the Pharisee react to Jesus breaking the Jewish convention on hand-washing (see also Mark 7:3-4)?

How would you gauge Jesus' reaction to the Pharisee's spoken (or unspoken) challenge?
Proportional/Escalating?

What is his argument in v.39-41

How does he illustrate this with examples from their lives in v.42 and v.43

Who steps in to defuse the argument? What response are they expecting? (v.45)

What response do they get in v.46?

What examples does he give of the teachers of the laws failings?

What is his final verdict in v.49?

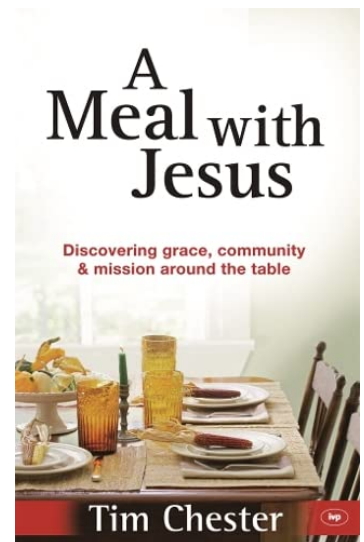
Why do you think Jesus is particularly critical of those who either pretend to be better than they are ('inside you are filthy' v.40) or who block other people's path to God (by 'removing the key to knowledge' v.52).

Would you have Jesus back again?

A lot of people in the UK will see Jesus as a mild mannered teacher who told everyone to love each other. How do you think they'd react to the Jesus we meet in this passage? What is refreshing about his challenge to power? Where would you like to see that in our society? Where is it challenging to you personally?

Takeaway:

How do you deal with conflict? Is there anything you need to learn from Jesus about how, when and why to stand up for truth?



Week Five:

12 Feb: Eating with Jesus at the Chief Pharisee's House

Starter Question:

Think of a time when you started out in a bad place and ended up in a good one e.g. a seat on a coach / plane / at a venue / theatre / place at a dinner perhaps? How would it feel if you were moved the other way? Would you hide, leave or grin and bear it?

Read: Luke 14: 1-24

Since Jesus' disciples ate grain in the grain fields on at Sabbath (see Week Two / Luke 5) the critics are still annoyed that Jesus is claiming that his new Kingdom cannot fit into their old systems. In week four he failed to keep a hand washing ceremony and that led to an Almighty argument! This week he intensifies the argument even more, again while eating with his main critics: Pharisees and Teachers of the Law. This week he's going to bring his new Kingdom life right into the meal and heal someone on the Sabbath in front of them, exposing that they are like the grumpy big brother in the famous prodigal son story that comes in the next chapter (Luke 15).

What can we imagine is the atmosphere at dinner from 14.1?

What do you think the man with 'abnormal swelling' in his legs and arms was doing there? Was he a guest, a visitor, someone who had broken in to see Jesus the healer? Had he been brought there to catch Jesus out? Was he a Pharisee/teacher of the law or household member who had got sick? Is there any way to know?

Who is the only person who speaks in v.1-6? Why do you think that is?

Be humble

Look briefly at verses 7-11:

What is Jesus's key teaching point? (v.11)

How do you think this advice would have been received in the room?

Who does he suggest we should invite to our celebrations? (v.12-14)

Say yes when invited

Look briefly at the parable of the Great Feast v.15-24

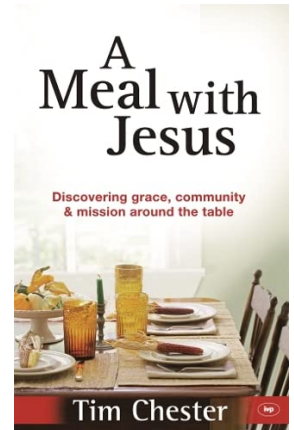
What sort of excuses do people make for not coming to Jesus' Kingdom of God banquet?

Who gets invited instead? What is the similarity with v.13?

How can we help people who feel like they have too much going for them / too much to do / to take time to come to God's Great Feast before they miss the invitation?

Takeaway

Most of us have experienced being left out, shame or rejection. How could we help others to not be left out in the coming weeks and months? Who around us needs a friendly invitation? Where can we make space at our table from someone God is calling to himself?



Week Six:

19 Feb: Eating with Jesus at Zacchaeus' House

Starter Question:

Have you ever queued up to see a famous person/celebrity? What was it like when they passed by or even spoke to you?

Read Luke 19:1-10

[Fun fact: where the translation says 'he was too short' this could refer to Zacchaeus, but it might even refer to Jesus being too short for Zacchaeus to see with the crowd all around him]

If you had to retell this story on News at Ten how would you put it?

What was Zacchaeus like before meeting Jesus?

What was he seeking? Why?

What are the key things about how Jesus engages with him?

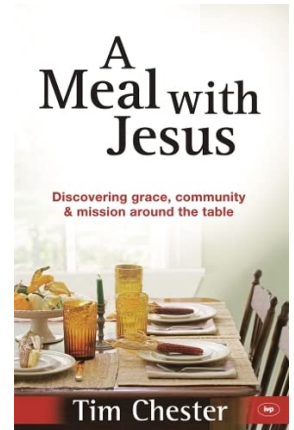
Why was going to his house for a meal so important to Zacchaeus? What does it give him a chance to do?

[brain teaser: If it is more blessed to give than receive, how does receiving well enable others to be blessed?]

What change occurs in him?

Takeaway:

How many Zacchaeus' are there in our community? What are they longing for? How might God want to engage those peeking in from the outside? How can receiving their hospitality help?



Week Seven:

26 Feb: Eating with Jesus at Simon the Leper's house

Starter Question:

Have you ever queued up to see a famous person/celebrity? What was it like when they passed by or even spoke to you?

Read John 12:1-7 (Matthew 26: 6-13; Mark 14:3-9)

Who are the main people in the story?

Background

We learn from Matthew and Mark that the home Jesus is eating in here is Simon's. Simon was a man who used to have leprosy, probably cured by Jesus. Simon's home is in Bethany the village that Jesus' great friends Lazarus, Mary and Martha live in (see Week Three / Luke 10).

In John 11 Jesus has just raised Lazarus from the dead - the final great sign of his power in John's gospel - and is now on his way to Jerusalem and the cross. This great occasion is marked by a beautiful, extravagant but melancholy act as his feet get anointed for his burial by one of his dear friends Mary, Lazarus' own sister.

This is appropriate because in John 11:56-57 we see that Lazarus being raised from the dead was the last straw for many of the priests and Pharisees. They believed this made Jesus too dangerous, too likely to lead a crowd in trouble, too popular. And so they ordered he must be arrested on sight to trial and execution. (See also their plot to kill Lazarus in John 12:9-10).

Going deeper:

What do you imagine the atmosphere was like at this meal given what has happened in Chapter 11 with Lazarus and that Simon the host has probably been one of those cured of leprosy? What dangers were they only too aware of?

Who is (still!) doing the serving? (Cf Week Three)

What is Judas' reaction to a year's wages worth of perfume being used to anoint Jesus?

How does Jesus respond?

What do you think the positive roles are for a) extravagance and b) symbolism for us as a humans,.

Where might we benefit from extravagance and symbolism today?

Takeaway

What beautiful act of gratitude could you do for Jesus this year?

Seven Signs in John's Gospel

1. Changing water into wine at Cana in John 2:1-11
2. Healing the royal official's son in Capernaum in John 4:46-54
3. Healing the paralytic at Bethesda in John 5:1-15
4. Feeding the 5000 in John 6:5-14
5. Jesus walking on water in John 6:16-24
6. Healing the man blind from birth in John 9:1-7
7. The raising of Lazarus in John 11:1-45