

Table Manners  
Dinning with the enemy  
Week 1  
Wynne Lankford

Bumper:

**Welcome to Southside Church it is great to be with all of you joining us online and here today!**

We are **beginning a six-week journey** that will take us back through **time and space.**

**Across cultures** to view the **interactions of Jesus** around what is most likely a **familiar place in your own home!**

The table.

Some of my **favorite memories have happened** around a dinner table...

My **wife and I have always valued dinner** around the table **with our family.**

During these times we have had:

- tough decisions...
- we celebrated victories...
- and we've taken a deep dive into the deep issues in life.

This is why I **love looking at the life of Jesus!**

Because **He also had some pivotal, controversial, and challenging conversations** around a table.

We are going to study **those table times** and **glean spiritual truth from His table encounters!**

Over the **next six weeks will join Jesus at six different table conversations**, observing the **“Table Manners”** that lead to **His last meal on Earth.**

Speaking about the last meal - **We will conclude this series with a very special experience on Good Friday** with a –

**“Table to the Cross Experience”**

You will want to put this on your calendar.

This **“Table to the Cross” experience** will be on **April the 10<sup>th</sup>** and **Easter is on April the 12<sup>th</sup>!**

Mark your calendars.

We have **6 weeks between now and then** to invite, remind, and **pray for friends and family**.

Think about the **people you know** who could benefit from **table conversations with Jesus**.

Inviting them to **be your guest over the coming weeks**.

**Invite them** to the **Easter weekend** including the **Table to the Cross** experience **April the 10<sup>th</sup> through the 12th**.

To get into the spirit of this **I will be hosting prayer gatherings on Tuesday nights** for the **next four weeks** at 6:30pm.

We will meet in the **loft at our Courthouse Road Campus** **four weeks of corporate prayer**.

I want to invite **you to attend as many of these 4 Tuesday** prayer times as we **march through March toward Easter!** (March Madness)

We believe **this sermon series, the Table to the Cross Experience and Easter celebration** will be an **amazing time for you and your family.**

Now on with our series **Table Manners!**

Today we begin **looking at the gospel of Luke** at one of **ten different Table encounters** that Jesus had.

The first of those table encounters was **Jesus eating with his enemies.**

Which leads me to a question:

Have you **ever had someone that you felt was out to get you or you felt was your enemy?**

When I was about **ten years old there was a kid that lived down the street from me** and believe it or not **his name was Butch.**

I'm not making this up, **his name was Butch and yes, he was a Bully - "Butch the bully."**

He would **pick on us, mistreat us, and cause all kinds of havoc** in our lives.

There was **one occasion when Butch lined us up and pulled out a fork** and announced that **he was going to stab us.**

I was **scared to death and mad** all at the same time.

Now **this was before my body had entered puberty** and I was a scrawny kid (I know that is hard to believe).

Butch was much bigger than me.

I was **terrified of Butch** and to make matters worse **some of the kids on my street would align themselves him.**

So, the **“Silver Street Bully”** and his **cronies were my enemies about to stab me.**

I had to make a decision: **what was I going to do?**

**Stand and fight or run away in fear and be called a sissy?**

What would you do? **What do you think I did?**

Let's take a poll.

**Get out your smart phones - point it at the QR code on the screen and it will take you to the polling sight.**

There you will **find 4 possible reactions** that I might have done.

**Which one do you think I actually did?**

Here are the **4 possible ways I responded:**

- 1. I screamed so loud that a neighbor lady called the police**
- 2. I grabbed the kid next to me and offered him up as a sacrifice**
- 3. I ran off in a zig-zag evasive pattern and Butch chased me with his fork.**
4. None of the above

What do you think was my reaction? (Interact with the results)

Wow....lots of great feedback!

Well I'll tell you later what I did but first I want you to **consider the atmosphere Butch had created** in my life.

Because this is the **exact atmosphere Rome had created** for the **Jews**.

Rome had **conquered and occupied** the Jews land and the **atmosphere was oppressive**.

The **oppression created by Romans** drove the **Jewish people to long for the promised Messiah** foretold by their prophets.

So, when Jesus **arrived on the scene preforming miracles**, many came to him believe that He might be **the one!**

The **one who had come to remove their oppression**.

The truth is, **Jesus did arrive to remove their oppression** but **not the oppression they were thinking about**.

This **leads us to our first table experience** we want to explore in our series.

It is **found in the gospel of Luke chapter 5** beginning at verse 27.

Open your Bible or Bible app to **Luke 5:27-32**. And follow along!

**Luke 5:27 (NIV) <sup>27</sup>After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him,**

Notice the first words, **“after this.”**

This **begs the question of context**. What was the “after this” referring to?

This is important **because it sets the context for Jesus encounter with Levi**.

The context is the **story of Jesus healing a paralyzed man**.



The **paralyzed man** had been lowered through a hole in the roof **because the crowds were pressing in around the house** where Jesus was teaching.

When **Jesus spoke to the paralyzed man**, in front of this massive crowd, **He made a bold claim.**

Jesus said, **“your sins are forgiven!”**

This **shocked the Pharisees** (who were the religious elite during that time).

They were **horrified that any man would claim power to forgive sin.**

Jesus **knowing what they were thinking** spoke directly to them!

He said ***Luke 5:22-24 (NIV) "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? <sup>23</sup> Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? <sup>24</sup> But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."***

Guess what.....the man did.”

This created a **huge fire storm**, as **everyone in the house was talking about it.**

**This is the setting as Jesus walks out of the house full of astonished people and then encounters Levi.**

Get this:

Jesus **walking away from this crowd** after boldly **claiming He can forgive sins and healing a lame man.**

Goes a **few short blocks approaching Levi** and makes another **bold statement.**

### **“Follow Me”**

Why was this a big deal?

It is a big deal **because Levi was a tax collector!**

**Tax collectors were friends to the Romans and Romans were the enemies of the Jews.**

Levi was a crony of **“Butch the Bully”!** He was the enemy!

It is **one thing for Jesus to forgive the sins of a Jewish man with a disability.**

That was a **kind act preformed on a fellow Jewish countryman.**

But Levi was different. **He was aligned with the enemy.**

In this **intentional encounter with the enemy** Jesus is making **another bold statement.**

Jesus is acknowledging that:

**Our outward condition does not hide our inward need!**

When Jesus sees us **He doesn't condemn us based on our outward condition.**

He knows our inward longings, along with our eternal potential.

Jesus **knew what the paraplegic needed** – forgiveness and healing!

And he **knew what Levi needed that same forgiveness and healing!**

Jesus **didn't wait for Levi to come to Him**, because he **likely never would have.**

Jesus **made the first move toward Levi.**

Jesus saw **Levi sitting at his tax booth and intentionally picks this public point of engagement with an enemy of the community.**

Levi now had a choice.

Will he **choose the wealth and status he had gained and stay with the money boxes**

**OR**

Will he **follow this Jesus who has the power to make broken people walk?**

This was a **big moment for Levi.** You see, **I believe we all are all trying to figure out how to walk.**

We all **wanting to experience a life that has meaning and significance.**

We are all searching for answers.

I believe **we are all longing for something** that will bring **fulfillment to the deepest places of our soul.**

And for Levi this was a huge moment. **Jesus was calling him to follow in public.**

His **choice would not remain private.** This would **not be a secret conversion.**

He will either **rise to the occasion or stay in the station of life he was in** or he would get up and walk.

Often **when I meet with people who are seeking answers to life's big questions.**

They **talk about all the things they have run to** looking for answers.

Often these things **have nothing to do with a relationship with Jesus.**

As we talk it through, **they often acknowledge that everything they have tried isn't producing** what they want and **hasn't brought the fulfilment** they long for!

So I ask them the famous **"Doctor Phil Question"** -- 'how is this working for you?'

The answer is **almost always the same**, not very good.

So then I say, why not try **responding to the call of Jesus to following Him?**

This was the decision Levi faced.

In the **Middle East**, they have what sociologists call the **"Shame and Honor"** culture.

All **meaningful interactions were held in public** so that you **could gain honor in life.**

Jesus is already **rewriting Levi's story just by giving him a public venue through which to regain some honor.**

Would he choose the **wealth and power of Rome, and stay aligned with the enemy?**

Or

Would he **respond to the unconventional ways** of Jesus?

The one who **claims to have the power to forgive sins and backs it up by making lame men walk?**

This leads us to the next verse 28, that shows Levi's simple, powerful, and profound response.

**<sup>28</sup>and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.**

You talk about a significant moment.

Jesus calling **an enemy of those in the community to follow Him**, and without hesitation, **Levi does it!**

**You might wonder why**, why would Levi do this?

I believe the **reason Levi did this** because:

**We follow what offers fulfillment**

Levi was **hungry for something**, he wanted **fulfillment in his life**.

And obviously **financial gain and climbing the corporate ladder hadn't satisfying his soul**.

All of his **searching for meaning and significance** left him lacking.

**We are all searching for meaning and significance.**

And many of us are searching for it **everywhere except the place God intended**.

We want intimacy, **so we seek sexual fulfilment without a commitment to the biblical plan of marriage** and end up **feeling more alone and emotionally wounded**.

We want **peace**, **so we drink more wine or take more pills or consume ourselves in work to distract us from the chaos**.



We want to matter, so **we work for wealth and status and power**, but they award us empty trophies and leave our soul starved for what really matters.

I remember **coming to the point in my life** where I realized nothing I had acquired, obtained, or engaged in satisfied the longings of my soul.

It wasn't **until I responded to the call** from Jesus!

To **follow Him - that my inner longings were fulfill** and my walk began to be healed!

Levi followed Jesus and it radically changed his life.

In fact, **Levi was so impacted he decides to throw a party.**

He **invites Jesus to the table with his friends** so they can get in **on the same thing he had experienced.**

Look at verse 29: **29 Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them.**

Why did Levi throw a banquet?

Because **Levi's life was changed he couldn't help himself.**

You see:

**When you experience transformation you want others to be transformed.**

When **you discover anything good** you want **others to know about it.**

Have you ever **found a great restaurant?** What do you do? **You tell someone about it.**

You watch a **great movie**, you can't stop talking about it.

**We want to passionately share our transformative experiences with others!**

Levi had found the **one thing in His life that began to answer the big questions and fulfilled the inner longings** he was having.

Levi **found something better than wealth, status, or power.**

And it immediately changed his life!

**Levi chose what money could never buy, a relationship with Jesus that offered forgiveness from his sins and a healing to his walk!**

And Levi wanted everyone to know about it.

**We can only imagine how problematic this was for the Jewish community.**

**Because Jesus was feasting at a table full of people that everyone outside the house saw as enemies!**

Not only was this a **problem for the people in general.**

**It was a real problem with the group who had just called him out for saying he had the power to forgive sin!**

Look with me at verse 30 <sup>30</sup> **But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"**

You see:

## **Jesus dinning with the enemy was creating enemies**

When you have your **life completely transformed by Jesus** you can help but want others to know about it.

And **sadly many people won't understand why you begin to reach out and love people who many feel are unlovable.**

Sadly many churches **have lost their ability to Love people right where they are at.**

Thy have **given their hearts to Religion** and **miss out on what Jesus offers.**

Religion seeks to **bind us up with rules** forcing us to **perform for righteousness.**

Jesus wants to **set us free from the oppression** of sin and set us **free to live the way God intended.**

It's **not about following a list of rules**, its finding a guide that leads us to freedom!

**It's not religion it's a relationship!**

This is why I'm glad I'm not living for a religion!

I am seeking a **deeper relationship with Jesus** who wants to free me from the **oppressive bondage of sin** and **teach me how walk!**

The **walk Jesus is teaching me is a walk where I love everyone** why learning the skill to speak truth in love.

**Jesus is my guide and He is giving me a life that is abundant and free while teaching me how to LOVE!**

Jesus **responds to this religious group with a powerful truth** that reinforces **what He proclaimed over the paraplegic man!**

Look at verse 31 with me.

**<sup>31</sup> Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. <sup>32</sup> I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."**

Jesus declares from the table of Levi why He had come into this world.

He made it clear that **He arrived on the scene to deal with the real sickness that all mankind deals with.**

Sin that leads to broken walks

It's the **inner condition of man that pulls us into trying to find life's meaning in things, status, position, or structures of religion that we create.**

A condition that **cripples us and keeps us from becoming everything God intended.**

You see:

**Jesus declares that there is a deeper healing that can transform the walk of every person!**

And to go further, Jesus loves to make us well so we can lead other to wellness.

**Jesus came to transform us so we could help Him transform the world!**

Levi became the apostle who followed Jesus and we **know him as Matthew.**

Matthew is the **Christian name Levi** would become known by, and it means “Yahweh’s Gift.”

**Matthew became one of the contributors** to what we call the **New Testament.**

**Mathew, Mark Luke and John, Matthew is the fist.**

He became a **follower who learned how to walk** and the **loved others who needed to learn how to walk!**

I believe Jesus wants to **change us so we can become a gift to the world!**

I believe there are **many here today who know you are not finding fulfillment** and you **need to respond to Jesus’ call that says follow me.**

**Jesus sees you and loved you right where your are**

Some of us here today are following but haven't figured out to whole love others piece.

Jesus reminds us that often, **salvation comes not by pointing fingers at our enemies but rather by moving in close and sharing a meal.**

You're probably still **wondering what I did in that defining moment with Butch?**

In that moment **when Butch held the fork**, planning on stabbing me and my friends, **I did the un-expected.**

Butch expected us to **fight him or run**, instead **I began to scream at the top of my lungs dropped to the ground and began flailing around like a crazy man.**

Butch was shocked, **he wasn't expecting this**, he didn't know what to do.

He was **expecting resistance or fear** but not **me doing something crazy.**



**Butch was so shocked and bewildered, and simply walked away!**

They don't teach this **method in leadership books** but it worked.

In the **weeks that followed** I started a club behind the shed in my back yard.

We called it the **spit and widdle club.**

What we would do is **take our knives to widdle** on wood and spit.

It was a great club -----We invited Butch.

He came with his knife, not a fork, and **we spent hours talking about life and widdling and spitting.**

We learned **we had a lot in common** and **that we all needed friends to help us through life.**

Butch became my friend.

Sometimes **we need to do the unexpected**, when gathering with those **we perceive to be our enemies**.

Maybe even **sit down around a table, enjoy a meal, and share what really matters**.

We all **need the same thing**, we all have **common ground**, and we are all **seeking answers to the big questions in life**.

**We all want to have a healing in our walk!**

And I believe the answers can be found when we invite Jesus to our table!

You're here and you need to know:

- Jesus sees you, he is looking beyond your outward condition He is calling you.
- Jesus is offering you fulfilment and healing
- Some here need to quit being religious and dive into a relationship with Jesus

**Let's pray!**

## **Response time**

Enemy in your life – pin their name to the cross

Someone you desire to see experience the transforming presence of Jesus like you have – pray for them at the altar

Maybe your response isn't in this room – maybe you need to have someone over for dinner and talk.

Go receive communion and invite Jesus' presence into that upcoming meal.