

World Communion Sunday

Luke 13:29-30

Okay, so, I want all of you to do a little time traveling with me — you're going to travel back in time to a particular moment that I know everyone here experienced.

For some of you, this trip back in time may only take you back to, say, Friday

—

others of us are going to be zooming back a few decades or more.

I want you imagine yourself in a school cafeteria.

And I want you to remember that moment when you come out of the lunch line with your tray of food —

I want you to remember what it was like to stand there, lunch in hand, and look out over the cafeteria

and wonder where you're going to sit. With whom.

I want you to feel those palms sweating,

feel that slight increase in your pulse rate,

as you look around the room and you don't see *anyone* to sit with.

Maybe your best friend is out sick.

Maybe your best friend is mad at you and doesn't want you sitting there.

Maybe you don't have a best friend right now.

Okay? everybody feel that slight edge of anxiety, uncertainty, self-doubt?

And now imagine that — oh thank God —

someone sees you standing there, and says,

wanna sit here? We got room at this table, you want to sit with us?

How good does that feel. The best.

Last week, I was invited to an luncheon for clergy, an interfaith event.

I was a little late - story of my life — and I was the last one through the line;

I got my sandwich and I turned and looked at the tables where we were supposed to sit,

and there wasn't any place left.
And I felt twelve years old.

Until a very kind rabbi said — there's room, there's room -
I'll pull up a chair.

Best feeling.

That feeling when someone says *don't worry - there's room at this table for you.*

When Jesus talked about what the Kingdom of God would look like,
that Kingdom that we're all working toward,
he liked to talk about it being like a big dinner,
a dinner to which everyone is invited,
and – most importantly - a dinner where there is a place for everyone.
For everyone, a place.

Kim just read that to you, a quote from Jesus in Luke's Gospel:
“People will come from east and west and north south,” he said, “and they
will eat at the table in the kingdom of God.”
You heard it read – but you know, we also *sang* it today.

Today we opened our service with a powerful and beautiful hymn,
which was suggested for today by Michael Crowley —
this is his fourth Sunday now as our organist and choir director.
'For Everyone Born, a place at the table,' we sang.
For women and men, for young and for old.
For everyone born, we sang, a safe place.
For everyone born, a place at the table.
At Christ's table, all are welcome.
There is a place for each of us.

Jesus lived that welcome every moment of his life.

Jesus began his life on this earth excluded, born in a stable --
and he spent the whole rest of his life making sure exclusion wouldn't
happen to anyone else.

He lived inclusion.

In fact, his disciples were always fielding complaints about it.

“What is it with your boss?” said the religious leaders,
“every time we turn around, there he is again, eating dinner with tax
collectors and lepers and women of ill repute.”

Jesus was constantly in trouble for who he broke bread with. He didn't care.
For everyone born, there was a place at Jesus' table.

And what that means for us is that no matter who we are
or who we've been,
who we're trying to be or where we're headed,
there is a place at the table for us.

Just like that kindly old rabbi who saw my uncertainty
and pulled up a chair for me

Jesus pulls up a chair for each one of us
and makes a place at the table.

Which is to say he makes a place in his love. A place in the kingdom.

Each one of us *here*, each one *everywhere*, Christ makes welcome.

Women and men, young and old,
lost, found, forgiven, forgiving,
hungering, hurting, giving, hoping,
for everyone born, a place at the table.

This is a particularly good day for us to remember that.

This is World Communion Sunday,
a day when Christ followers everywhere gather around the table,
with their hearts and prayers open to their sisters and brothers in every
country.

Today Jesus' table extends right round the world.

Today at this table we gather everyone in
from south and north, from east and west —

a family in Syria, a woman in India, secret churches in China, worshipers in
the Philippines, joyful churches in Haiti.

All are here with us.

Every language imaginable, every color in God's' rainbow,
all at this table.

So when we rise from this table, our task is twofold:

to remember that there is always a place for us at Christ's table and in God's
heart --

and to remember that every child of God – every – is as welcome in God's
love as we are.

There's room here, Jesus says,
room at my table, room in my kingdom,
a place just for you, just as you are.

Come sit beside me.

Amen.